

HARRIS III, OTTO D., Ph.D. Transforming Race, Class, and Gender Relationships Within The United Methodist Church Through Wesleyan Theology and Black Church Interpretive Traditions. (2014)
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In this dissertation, I analyze the historic and present social conditions of The United Methodist Church within the context of American culture. I also present strategies for reconciliation among estranged Black and White race groups, socioeconomic class groups, gender erotic predisposition groups, and ethnic groups other than Black and White. I use the theoretical lens of Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology. J. Deotis Roberts (1971/2005) proclaims, "*The black church, in setting black people free, may make freedom possible for white people as well. Whites are victimized as the sponsors of hate and prejudice which keeps racism alive*" (p. 33). The Black church is distinct from mainstream American church in that the Black church offers more upbeat and up-tempo worship, rhythmic preaching, gospel songs and spirituals through choirs with improvisational lead singers, call and response interaction between the preacher and the congregation, sermons that held justice and mercy in tension through hope, and worship experiences that are not constrained by time limits. From the Black experience in America, the Black church offers a profound response for existential predicaments related to "life and death, suffering and sorrow, love and judgment, grace and hope, [and] justice and mercy" (McClain, 1990, p. 46). I draw from the statements of priorities of United Methodist theorists (seminaries and theological schools) and practitioners

(annual conferences) to critique collective expressed values and behaviors of United Methodists. Also, from congregations in the Western North Carolina (Annual) Conference of The United Methodist Church, I analyze narratives from personal interviews of pastors of congregations that have a different majority race composition than their own, of pastors of multi-ethnic congregations, and of congregants from multi-ethnic congregations. I suggest that the social history and present social conditions of The United Methodist Church are perplexing, particularly concerning Black and White relations. However, The United Methodist Church has the mandate, heritage, responsibility, organizational structure and spiritual capacity to contribute to substantive and sustainable reconciliation in the Church and in American society.

Keywords: Ireconciliation, Black church, church and society, social frame, United Methodist, interpretive tradition

TRANSFORMING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH THROUGH WESLEYAN
THEOLOGY AND BLACK CHURCH
INTERPRETIVE TRADITIONS

by

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Approved by

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This dissertation project is dedicated to all of the African American Methodists who stayed faithful—whether as part of the institution or not—and to ALL who envision(ed) and work(ed) toward a truly “united” United Methodist Church and reconciled nation.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Otto D. Harris III, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I evaluate *untied*¹ social relations within The (predominantly White) United Methodist Church through the lens of Wesleyan theology intersecting with Black church interpretive traditions. In The United Methodist Church, as elsewhere in society, “The intense white preoccupation with black Americans in recent decades not only underscores the pervasive anti-black stereotypes, ideas, and images of the dominant frame but also reveals deep racial emotions and inclinations” (Feagin, 2010, p. 100). The American institutional church is part of a larger American culture that has been unsettled since its formation and is still unsettled by racial *irreconciliation* sustained through the American White racial frame. However, the nature and mission of the church demands intervention against the offenses that contradict who the church is called to be.

I explore the concept of *untied* from two different fronts: (a) The United Methodist Church being *untied*, or disconnected, reflected by segregated local congregations and other structures and practices that support unjust social relations; and (b) The necessity of all participants being *untied*, or liberated,

¹Because of the close lettering between the words “united” and “untied,” United Methodists are often warned to ensure that they do not transpose the letters and mistakenly refer to the church as “*Untied* Methodist.”

before being reconciled. I propose using principles of Black church interpretive traditions that complement Wesleyan theology to provide an approach to contribute to a United Methodist Church that is alive and engaged in social transformation.

In this *Dissertation Introduction*, I present an overview of the structure of the dissertation, of the statements of priorities of United Methodist theorists and practitioners, of the interviewees who provided narratives for this dissertation, and of the methodology I used for this dissertation. This dissertation is divided into two parts. “Part One—Black and White Race Reconciliation” addresses the estranged social predicaments between White and Black persons in The United Methodist Church within the American context. Because of the chronic and excessive estrangement between Black and White persons in America, which Emerson and Smith (2000) refer to as a “major fault line of American racial division” (p. 2), I analyze the present racial conditions between Black and White persons of The United Methodist Church within the context of contemporary American culture, reflected in Chapters II-V:

- In *Chapter II* “Being Black and United Methodist,” I examine complexities of being Black in a majority White denomination through personal reflections, reflections about John Wesley and early Methodism, and a presentation of African American interpretive communities and traditions;

- In *Chapter III* “What Has Been Done with African Americans?” I explore the historical and present *untied* racial climate in America, in American public school systems, and in The United Methodist Church in America;
- In *Chapter IV* “Why Do Anything with African Americans?” I evaluate rationale for and implications of reconciling Black Methodists and White Methodists within The United Methodist Church; and
- In *Chapter V* “What Is Being Done about *Untying* African Americans?” I explore social relations at a congregational level through personal interactions by analyzing interviews of Black pastors serving majority White congregations, of White pastors serving multi-ethnic congregations, and of congregants of multi-ethnic congregations.

“Part Two—Class, Gender, and Ethnic Reconciliation” addresses the estranged social predicaments among class, gender erotic predisposition, and ethnic groups other than Black or White in The United Methodist Church within the American context. A theology of reconciliation regarding race will have implications on other areas of social dysfunction in church and society, including socioeconomic *irreconciliation*, gender eroticism *irreconciliation*, and *irreconciliation* among other ethnicities, which is treated in *Chapter VI*, “What Shall Be Done with Others of Us?”

Statements of Priority

I use (a) statements of priorities of United Methodist seminaries as theorists, (b) statements of priorities of United Methodist annual conferences² as practitioners, and (c) interviews of 22 persons (see Appendix J) involved in cross-racial and/or multi-ethnic ministry in the Western North Carolina (Annual) Conference of The United Methodist Church as primary source material. In *Chapter III*, I analyze statements of commitments published on the websites of United Methodist institutions and affiliates to evaluate, compare, and contrast the priorities of the theological schools (primary theorists) and annual conferences (primary regional practitioners) of The United Methodist Church. These statements of commitments are the proclamations that the institutions have defined for themselves about themselves. I assume that a general understanding about the identity, values, and priorities of the institutions can be established from the statements.

Drawing from the websites of the 13 United Methodist seminaries and from websites of the 38 United Methodist approved seminaries and theological schools (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2012), I compiled a database of mission statements, vision statements, priorities statements, and other statements of commitments (see Appendix I). Given their endorsement

²Annual conferences are “the fundamental bodies” (Alexander, 2008, p. 26) of The United Methodist Church. An annual conference in The United Methodist Church is “a regional body, an organizational unit, and a yearly meeting” (United Methodist Communications, 2011b, “Annual Conferences,” para. 1). Annual conferences of The United Methodist Church are regional bodies directed by a bishop, or general superintendent of the episcopal area.

from The United Methodist Church and the guideline of The United Methodist Church that directs its ministers to the approved seminary and theological schools for theological and pastoral preparation, these seminaries and theological schools can reasonably be understood as primary theorists for The United Methodist Church. Thus, the priorities of these institutions are subject to critical examination by United Methodists.

Likewise, the priorities of the fifty-nine annual conference of The United Methodist Church are subject to critical examination. The statements of commitments of annual conferences reflect the priorities of United Methodist congregations of particular regions that practice theology collectively. Annual conferences in the United States are comparable in number and in geographic scope to theological schools. Further, the University Senate³ of The United Methodist Church promotes exchanges of ideas and support between the theological schools and annual conferences. Therefore, I also compiled a database of mission statements, vision statements, priorities statements, and other statements of commitments from websites of the annual conferences in the United States (See Appendix G).

Again, given the denominational and U.S. cultural perceptions of mission statements, this dissertation assumes that these published statements represent the priorities of these institutions. Representatives of each institution attempt to

³The University Senate is authorized by The United Methodist Church to review schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools to determine if they meet the criteria to be listed as an affiliate and receive support from The United Methodist Church.

capture the institution's reason for existence in a few sentences or a few paragraphs. I recognize *collective patterns of priorities* (Casey, 1993, p. 19) and *collective patterns of inclusion, omission, and disparity* (Casey, 1993, p. 234) for the seminaries and theological schools and for the annual conferences drawn from their statements.

As with other denominations and other institutions, The United Methodist Church considers clarity of mission to be vital for effectiveness. The *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* declares, "Whenever United Methodism has had a *clear sense of mission*, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world" [italics mine] (Alexander, 2012, p. 92). The University Senate's (See Footnote 3, page 5) review process includes an evaluation of the institutions' mission statements. The University Senate of The United Methodist Church (2007) instructs, "The mission statement of the institution shall define and articulate its church relatedness. This statement should be operational in the life of the college" (p. 37). Not all of the statements of the seminaries or theological schools or of the annual conferences are similar in length. Some statements were a single sentence while others were several paragraphs. The development of and philosophies about commitment statements are likely as diverse as the lengths.

None of the theological schools or the annual conferences details how the statements are developed, other than some offering statements of who approved

the adoption of the statement. Some of the statements may have been developed through intense reflection while others may have been redacted or borrowed from other bodies. Some may have considered the input of a vast constituency while others may have been developed by a select few. Some may give their statements casual consideration in practice. Some of the statements may never be operational in the classroom or in local congregations. Others may give their statements significant consideration, like Luther Seminary (n.d.), who considers its mission statement to represent “a major marker on the path of our journey . . . a primary point of reference for all of the strategic decisions we are making . . . [and] . . . a living statement that continues to breathe life into our work” (paras. 2–3). Regardless of how the statement was developed or the level of significance the institution places on the statement, at least for the seminaries and theological schools, the University Senate ensures that the statements are employed in the operation of the institutions.

In compiling the statements, I searched primarily for mission statements. Not all of the institutions published formal “mission statements” on their websites. However, some of the institutions that did not publish formal “mission statements” published other statements of commitments of similar length and content. Forty-four of the fifty-one seminaries and theological schools published mission statements, three published purpose statements, one published a direction statement, one published a motto, one published a theological emphasis statement, and one published a statement of aspiration, purpose, and identity.

Forty-two of the 59 annual conferences published mission statements. Two of the annual conferences had a “priorities statement” and one had a “strategic direction statement.” For 14 of the annual conferences, I was unable to locate a mission statement or any other statement of commitments. Only four of the 11 annual conferences of one region, the North Central Jurisdiction, published mission statements, suggesting that having a mission statement was not a high priority in that region.

Personal Narratives

I analyze, compare, and contrast narratives received from interviews with United Methodists in the Western North Carolina [Annual] Conference who are actively engaged in social contexts and/or social movements that are intentional about racial, socio-economic, gender eroticism, and/or ethnic reconciliation. *Interviewees’ narratives are distinguished by their pseudonyms presented in boldfaced font.* Less than 1% of the 1,100 United Methodist local churches in the Western North Carolina Conference (The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d., *About*) self-identify as multi-ethnic or inter-racial. I analyze narratives from interviews of two pastors of the local churches, both being White men. I knew one of these pastors casually prior to contacting him for the interview. I had not met other pastor prior to contacting him for the interview. Also, less than 1% of the appointed clergy in the Western North Carolina Conference serves as pastor of a congregation whose primary ethnic composition is different than hers or his. I analyze narratives from interviews

from three of them: One Black man, one Black woman, and one White woman. I knew the two women pastors casually prior to contacting them for the interview. I knew the Black man pastor quite well prior to contacting him for the interview.

I also examine narratives drawn from the interviews of sixteen lay persons from the two churches that self-identify as multi-ethnic or inter-racial. I use pseudonyms of the interviewees to maintain confidentiality. While each pastor's interview was taken individually, the interviews of the laypersons were taken in groups of three or four. One of the laypersons' interviews was taken individually because of transportation challenges.

Each pastor selected the congregants to be interviewed. I initially contacted the pastors of the two churches that self-identify as multi-cultural for interviews. Upon contact with the pastors, I requested an audience with some of congregants of the churches where they serve for interviews. So the interviewees from each church were personally selected by each pastor. One of the pastors provided four participants and the other provided twelve participants, in addition to the pastors.

The two churches are in metropolitan areas in western North Carolina. 50% of the participants were African American, 6 women and 3 men. In addition, there were three White men, including the two White men pastors. The other White man is married to an African American woman. There was one White woman interviewee. The other five interviewees have international origins, one man from Ecuador, One Liberian woman, one man from India, and one man and

one woman from Trinidad and Tobago. With the exception of two, each participant was either born or has lived outside of the South in America. The participants who mentioned their religious identities reflected significant diversity: four Baptists, two Methodists, one Catholic, one Episcopalian, one AME, one Presbyterian/Methodist, one Muslim, one Muslim/Hindu, five didn't mention, and one Baptist/AME.

From the interviews, I explore:

- their source of inspiration for pursuing racial reconciliation;
- the challenges that they faced in establishing or face in maintaining a multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic culture;
- factors, principles, and practices that contribute(d) to effective multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic ministry;
- the racial composition of the community where the local church is located;
- how socioeconomic class relates to the local church's reconciliation efforts;
- how gender eroticism relates to the local church's reconciliation efforts;
- how ethnic groups, other than Black and White, are considered in the local church's reconciliation efforts; and
- insights that they would share with others working towards racial reconciliation.

In addition, I examine narratives from an interview with the Western North Carolina Director of Discipleship Ministries, whose responsibilities include justice, reconciliation, race, and religion. From that interview, I explore:

- The Conference's position regarding and philosophy about multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic ministry at the local church level;
- the practices and principles that the Conference recommends that are designed to contribute to effective multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic local church ministry;
- the obstacles local churches generally face while attempting to engage in multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic ministry;
- how socioeconomic class relates to the Conference's reconciliation efforts;
- how gender-eroticism relates to the Conference's reconciliation efforts;
- how the Conference considers ethnic groups other than Blacks and Whites in their reconciliation efforts; and
- successes which she has observed related to racial reconciliation within The United Methodist Church.

Methodology

Like with the theological schools and annual conferences, I recognize *collective patterns of priorities* (Casey, 1993, p. 19) and *collective patterns of*

inclusion, omission, and disparity (Casey, 1993, p. 234) for the pastors and congregants from local churches drawn from their interviews. The interviews reveal *complexities and ambiguities* that reflect the complex nature of multi-cultural ministry. I also present *common language, common themes, common experiences, and/or a meta-narrative* from the interviews that may contribute to effectiveness in reconciled relationships for The United Methodist Church and broader society. While the content of the interviews *may be episodic and anecdotal*, while certain phenomena observed among interviewees *may be regional*, and while such a small sample size *may not translate directly into generalizable knowledge*, these narratives *illustrate transgressions of cultural boundaries in action and contribute theory and practices that have potential to lead United Methodists toward social transformation through race reconciliation*. Through these interviews and narratives of persons actively engaged in racial reconciliation efforts, from an analysis of the mission statements of theorists and practitioners of The United Methodist Church, and from a survey of related literature, I attempt to construct effective theories and practices designed to contribute to social transformation through race reconciliation.

In spite of a dominant culture of un-critical non-consciousness⁴ towards race relations in The United Methodist Church, I encourage United Methodists of all ethnicities, socio-economic levels, and gender eroticism stances to become

⁴ I use “non-conscious” as opposed to “unconscious” as the term “unconscious” is typically associated with a physical state. I use “non-conscious” to represent a psychological disconnect from reality.

critically conscious, to work to raise the social consciousness of others, and to strategize and intervene against racial social inertia in order to fulfill the “transforming the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 91) mission of The United Methodist Church. *The United Methodist Church has the mandate, heritage, responsibility, and spiritual capacity to contribute to authentic racial reconciliation in the Church⁵ and in the U.S. society.* As a pastor of a United Methodist congregation, I assume a measure of responsibility and am willing to leverage whatever measure of agency that I have towards the task of advancing a race reconciliation movement. I hope this dissertation can contribute to discourse that will move The United Methodist Church towards providing society with a model of social reconciliation.

⁵ I use the term “Church” capitalized to represent the idyllic universal Church established and commissioned by Jesus Christ. This “Church” is not synonymous with the American institutional church, denominational churches, or local congregations.

CHAPTER II

PART ONE—BLACK AND WHITE RACE RECONCILIATION

Being Black and United Methodist in America

*For there our captors asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
How could we sing the LORD’s song
in a foreign land?
—Psalm 137:3-4 NRSV*

For some, being Black and being United Methodist in America are inherently contradictory. Like the exiled children of Israel (Psalm 137), Black persons in America live among captors and tormentors within an adverse dominant social frame. Black persons are expected to respond in their subservient settings with amusement and singing, producing an affective predicament—“How could we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4). The Black church developed as a separate entity alongside mainstream American church(es), including The United Methodist Church. A strand of Black church tradition and community developed within Methodism. *Black persons within United Methodism maintained practices and emphases of the Black church while upholding Wesleyan/Methodist tenets.* Black United Methodist pastor Vance P. Ross illustrates this tension. Ross (2012) proclaims, “I was born Black. Even though the only church I ever went to was United Methodist, my

United Methodism is a choice. My . . . Blackness [is a gift] from God” (p. 34).

Ross recognizes Blackness as an absolute and United Methodism as a preference. About the inherited absolute for those who share his race identity and those with other race identities, Ross (2012) resolves, “I believe we ought to be proud of our heritage, proud of our culture, proud of our people—and so should my less than Black sisters and brothers” (p. 34). Ross observes the tension between being a member of the Black church and of Black culture against denominational commitments. Ross (2012) proposes, “I believe that God gifted us with Black church and Black culture. Yet so often our denominational options of affiliation trump our God-gifted and God-created obligations” (p. 35). Ross suggests that some choose to embrace denominational options over and against race identity. I do not believe choosing United Methodism over Blackness is constructive or necessary. *I submit that Black persons can remain faithful to their Black traditions and community while choosing the United Methodist option.*

Unlike Ross, I have been part of faith traditions other than United Methodist. Yet, like Ross and all Black persons in The United Methodist Church, we have chosen United Methodism. In this chapter, I offer my personal contexts that contribute to my choice of United Methodism and my commitment to reconciliation. Secondly, I present reflections about John Wesley and the People called Methodists that are meaningful to race discourse. Lastly, I explore collective African American experiences, traditions, and theologies. The aim of

this chapter is to establish that African Americans have essential contributions to offer Black Methodists and White Methodists for their existential predicaments.

Autobiographical Reflections

I understand that my personal contexts may contribute to inferences that I make. I am an African American ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, which is a faith tradition that has a predominantly White constituency and a parallel structure for Black churches. I am appointed as pastor to a local congregation in North Carolina. I am a student of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity. I have high regard for the nature and responsibility of the Church (see Footnote 5, page 13). My vocation as an African American pastor in a predominantly White denomination exposes me to the *egregious, pervasive, and resilient nature of Black/White irreconciliation*. I am concerned about the present condition and the future of The United Methodist Church, in particular, and the universal Church and U.S. society, in general.

I have served as pastor of two churches, both of which have majority Black compositions. The vast majority of my Black colleagues serve and have always served congregations with majority Black compositions—which typically have smaller memberships, less adequate facilities, and less financial resources than their White counterpart congregations. According to the “Find-A-Church” search tool (The United Methodist Church, n.d.; see Appendix B), The United Methodist Church has 1,923 churches in North Carolina. Of those churches, 131 are considered “African/Black.” Of the “African/Black” churches, *4 have an*

average worship attendance of more than 200, the largest being 380. There are 228 churches that are considered to be “Caucasian/White” that have average worship attendance of more than 200, the largest being 2,188. Unless a significant change occurs, I expect that the majority my Black colleagues and I will continue to be appointed as pastors to these congregations with majority Black compositions.

My personal denominational history is quite eclectic, but all within the Black church context prior to connecting with The United Methodist Church. I have been connected with Holiness, Baptist, Church of Christ, and non-denominational faith traditions. My entry into The United Methodist Church was a racially non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) decision. My initial experience with The United Methodist Church was through a Black United Methodist church, which reflected the elements of the Black church that I previously experienced—e.g., *upbeat and up-tempo services, rhythmic preaching, gospel songs and spirituals through choirs with improvisational lead singers, call and response interaction between the preacher and the congregation, messages that held justice and mercy in tension through hope, and worship experiences that were not constrained by time limits*. I was non-conscious of the race history or the present racial context of the broader United Methodist Church. I assumed I was at home in just another Black church.

Since becoming a part of The United Methodist Church, particularly as a clergy member, I have had opportunities to spend time, share space, exchange

stories, and serve with United Methodists of various race identities. While these experiences have been limited, sporadic, and/or temporary for me, they have revealed a sustained *irreconciliation* between Black and White United Methodists, particularly at the local church level. Certainly, some congregants have substantive connections with particular congregations—e.g., friendships, family heritages, theological emphases. Yet, every Sunday, Black United Methodists pass by United Methodist churches with majority White compositions on their way to their United Methodist churches, which have majority Black compositions. Likewise White United Methodists pass by United Methodist churches with majority Black compositions on the way to their United Methodist churches, which have majority White compositions. Black and White United Methodists pass by churches of their own denomination that share a Wesleyan theological framework, heritage, and organizational structure. Yet, at least partially, because of racial *irreconciliation*, many United Methodists are unable to share worship spaces and resources across racial boundaries.

As part of a faith tradition that identifies itself as “United,” this contradictory reality disturbs me. *Racism and division is theologically inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as I understand it.* I also understand, as Jennings (1997) advises, “all theology is contextual” (p. 38). I recognize that my race-related experiences and social contexts inform my theology.

Generational theorists like Strauss and Howe analyzes generational phenomena from a perspective that does not consider race contexts and

generally reflects a White perspective (Powe, 2012). Powe presents a generational analysis from an African American perspective, which provides me a framework and language to better understand and articulate my theological perspective. While acknowledging that the Black community is not absolutely homogenous, widely recognized representatives of the Black community emphasized particular themes during certain periods in American history, which, along with the emphases of the dominant culture, helped frame the values of African Americans during those periods. Powe evaluates these themes and groups generations into four categories: The Civil Rights Generation (pp. 7–12), the Black Consciousness Generation (pp. 12–14), the Integrationist Generation (pp. 15–19), and the Hip Hop Generation (pp. 19–22). Powe also notes that another generation is emerging after the Hip Hop Generation whose identity is still being shaped.

I was raised in North Carolina in the 1970s. I identify very closely with the Integrationist Generation. Powe posits that the members of the Integrationist Generation experienced a diversity which the previous generations worked for but never experienced. Powe (2012) explains that the members of the Integrationist Generation “inherited a legacy from the two previous generations that allowed for social, educational, political, and religious mobility not typically afforded to previous African American” and “The integrationists are the first generation to really experience social and educational integration on a broad scale” (p. 18). About his high school experience, **Rev. Douglas**, an interviewee

for this dissertation project who is an African American pastor in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, added, “The high school experience is what kind of instilled in me that, we’re all here together, so let’s all work together. Let’s all compete together. That’s just the way that I’ve been” (personal interview, 2013, July 25). Members of the Integrationist Generation were invited to occupy spaces that African Americans were previously beaten, arrested, and killed for entering.

While the era in which I grew up had a particular emphasis regarding race, my personal racial experiences were multifaceted. While my high school, undergraduate college, and church experiences were in all-Black settings, my formative school and residential experiences were shared with others who had different race identities. Race was not a central conversation in my home, possibly because of the broader cultural emphasis on “the Great American Melting Pot” during my upbringing. Nevertheless, all of my mother’s and father’s friends were Black and the places where they took me—e.g., barber shops, restaurants, grocery stores, and churches—were populated by mostly Black people.

My best friend as a child was a White child named Ronald. Ronald and I would walk to school together and play outside together. We never went in each other’s home. I did not consider that to be strange because I did not go into any other child’s home, nor did any other child come into my home. One day, Ronald and I had a minor argument on the way home from school. The other school

children surrounded us and began to chant, “It’s a fight, it’s a fight between Black and White.” To me, the fight was not between Black and White, but between Ronald and Otto. Black children, with whom I never played or walked to school, instructed me to bash my friend in the face. I was thoroughly confused about how to respond in that situation. I’m sure fights between any two children would have received a lot of attention. However, the spectators would not have been as divided or invested if race was not a central attraction.

Racial integration theoretically advanced the conversation concerning the “What shall be done with Black people?” question. However, for me, the question still remains open. I am grateful for my childhood experiences in racially diverse settings. *I have been acculturated and socialized to esteem integration with high regard.* That is a significant lens through which I live out my faith and into my being. While I recognize reconciliation as a dominant theme in New Testament Scriptures, I also recognize that my emphasis on social reconciliation may be tempered by my Integrationist Generational lens.

John Wesley and the People Called Methodists

I am an African American pastor who joined with The United Methodist Church with an un-critical non-consciousness (see Footnote 4, page 12) towards the denomination’s race history. I have since been exposed to events and practices that are meaningful to me about John Wesley—credited founder of the Methodist tradition—and of the people called Methodists. I, briefly, present my understandings of some Wesleyan and Methodist events and practices here for

those who do not have an extensive background in Methodist history, doctrine, and/or practices.

The Church of England, from which Methodism emerged, formed in the midst of protests and separations that pervaded during the Protestant Reformation. For reasons which were more politically-driven than theologically-driven, the Parliament of England, following the dictates of the king, severed ties with the Catholic Church of Rome and established the Church of England in 1534 (González, 1985). Anglican Priest John Wesley (1703–1791) promoted piety, holiness, *ministry to the masses*, and renewal *within* the Church of England. As a student at Oxford University, Wesley and several others met regularly for prayer, devotion, and to “work out their own salvation” (Alexander, 2012, p. 76). Other students derided Wesley and his cohorts, referring to them as the Holy Club, Enthusiasts, Bible Moths, and Methodists (Haynes, 2010). The “Methodists” term of derision became a term of endearment. The followers of Wesleyan theology and practice came to embrace being called “Methodists.”

Wesley journeyed as a missionary to the American colonies in 1736, intending to preach the gospel to the “Indians” (González, 1985, p. 209). He was invited to serve as pastor in Savannah, GA. He and his brother, Charles, were in the New World for less than 2 years. In the New World, Wesley experienced political challenges, legal concerns, failure of a romance, and doubts of faith (González, 1985). Many, including Wesley himself, consider the missionary efforts of his only voyage to the New World a failure (Haynes, 2010).

Upon Wesley's return to England, Methodism began to grow as a social movement, which spread to the American colonies (Alexander, 2012). As Methodism grew in the American colonies, the constituents sought liturgical authority to administer sacraments and sought structure to organize the movement. However, as González (1985) informs:

Wesley had no interest in founding a new denomination. On the contrary, he was an Anglican minister, and throughout his life he remained as such. Rather, his purpose was to awaken and cultivate the faith of the masses in the Church of England. (p. 213)

Wesley remained loyal to the Church of England and the nation of England throughout his life, which contributed to the tension among those in the American colonies during the American Revolution (Alexander, 2012). In 1784, a gathering of Methodists in the United States established The Methodist Episcopal Church (Alexander, 2012).

While Wesley did not intend to establish a denomination, he did intend to contribute to the reformation of the Church of England, which is partly what inspires me to hope for social transformation in race relations within The United Methodist Church. As the Methodist movement grew, members of the Church of England establishment attempted to contain the effects of the movement, including the bishop of Bristol. When the bishop of Bristol attempted to limit Wesley's preaching within his parishes, Wesley responded, "The world is my parish." As González (1985) exclaims, "Those words, originally uttered in protest

against a rigid ecclesiastical organization, later became the motto of the Methodist missionary enterprise” (pp. 213–214).

Further, Wesley was exceptionally transparent with his failures and his faith development and articulation. Wesley documented his faith journey extensively through diaries, sermons, hymns, letters, and notes. This extensive documentation provides a detailed account of a vivified living core of the Christian faith (Alexander, 2012). Wesley’s theology and way of being was dynamic, reflective, and practical. Wesley documented how, in the midst of doubting his faith, he had an experience in which his heart was “strangely warmed,” through which he became sure his salvation through Christ alone (González, 1985, p. 212). Wesley worked extensively to offer relief to those who were impoverished. He was not opposed to capitalism. However, he established a socio-ethical formula for responsible capitalism: “Earn all you can . . . Save all you can . . . Give all you can” (Outler & Heitzenrater, 1991, p. 356). Wesley initially despised “open air” preaching. As Wesley witnessed the effectiveness that “open air” preaching had towards reaching the masses, Wesley resolved that he “should not hinder the work of God” (González, 1985, p. 213). In his description of Wesley, Maddox (1994) portrays, “The quintessential practitioner of theology was not the detached academic theologian; it was the pastor/theologian who was actively shepherding Christian disciples in the world” (p. 17). Wesley’s practical, reflective, and dynamic way of being coupled with a

desire to contribute to the transformation of an institution is helpful towards social transformation related to race reconciliation in The United Methodist Church.

What did John Wesley do with Black persons? In Wesley's extensive writings, he did not address the issue of reconciliation between races. Race segregation was not a significant issue during Wesley's lifetime. In fact, African Americans were actively involved in the first generation of Methodism in the American colonies beginning as early as 1769 (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011; Alexander, 2012; Gravely, 2001; Kirk, 2009). While he did not address race segregation, he did offer insights related to the other egregious practice related to racial injustice—slavery.

Wesley's contemporary, William Wilberforce (1759–1833), was an adamant opponent against slavery. Wilberforce's upper class parents and grandparents were opposed to Methodism because of its fervor and serious posture towards religion (Tomkins, 2007). From reading his letters at 12 years old, Wilberforce's mother feared he was "turning Methodist" (Tomkins, 2007, p. 13). Wilberforce maintained association with Methodism and was later derided as being "full of Methodism and full of enthusiasm" (Tomkins, 2007, p. 108). Along with association with Methodism, Wilberforce shared a disdain for slavery with John Wesley. At fourteen years old, Wilberforce wrote to a newspaper in York condemning the slave trade (Tomkins, 2007). About the time of his election to Parliament at 21 years old, Tomkins (2007) reports, "According to Wilberforce's sons, his schoolboy dislike of the slave trade had either been

revived, or had continued” (p. 26). Near the time of Wesley’s death, Parliament was in deliberation over abolition. Wilberforce, as a Member of Parliament, took the anti-slavery position (Tomkins, 2007). Wilberforce received support and encouragement from well-wishers, including a letter from Wesley in 1791. In his letter, Wesley cautioned:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum* [Athanasius against the world], I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that *execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion* (emphasis mine), of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. (Wesley, as cited in Tomkins, 2007, pp. 92–93)

Wesley viewed American slavery as “that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion,” but too overwhelming for any one human to contest. American slavery was an immense enterprise that had robust systems sustaining it.

Wesley warned Wilberforce that confronting such an enterprise would deplete his strength. Nevertheless, Wesley continued:

But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? . . . Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it. (Wesley, as cited in Tomkins, 2007, p. 93)

Wesley perceived slavery as unconquerable by Wilberforce alone, but urged Wilberforce to proceed with the hope of American slavery vanishing away if God was with him. Wilberforce and the other abolitionists were defeated in the immediate case (Tomkins, 2007). Yet, Wilberforce did indeed proceed. In less

than two decades, resulting in significant part to Wilberforce's efforts, the British government began taking action against slavery—e.g., forbidding the slave trade, decreeing freedom for slavery in British colonies, and seeking treaties with other nations to end slavery (González, 1985).

Like American slavery, racism in the American United Methodist Church is an “execrable villainy” and a “scandal of religion.” Yet it may seem too overwhelming to oppose. American race segregation is an immense enterprise valuable to influential persons and sustained by robust systems. Intervening against racism in America could deplete one's strength, resources, and sanity. Yet, with a small measure of presumption, Wesley's advice to Wilberforce could extend to those who desire to oppose the “execrable villainy” of racism—if accompanied by God, proceed to intervene with the hope of racial injustice vanishing away.

African American Interpretive Communities and Traditions

Out of the Black enslavement experience and the Black church exile experience in America, the Black church, or invisible church, experience emerged. Williams (1993) deduced from the Black church experience that “White folks and us both Christians, but we ain't got the same religion” (p. 206). *The Black church experience emerged as something altogether different than the White church.* Williams's deduction assumes that both White folks and Black folks have religion, which offers meaning to the existential predicaments of humanity (e.g., weakness, death, suffering, oppression, and estrangement).

West (1999) proclaims, “Existential freedom is a mode of being-in-the-world that resists dread and despair. It embodies an ecstatic celebration of human existence without affirming prevailing reality” (p. 436). African Americans have particular expertise with “dread and despair,” in spite of which they “embody an ecstatic celebration” through the Black church. This expertise can be useful to African Americans and to White Americans in their quest for a meaningful response to their existential predicament.

Out of the context of a white racial frame, which broadcasts messages of White superiority and Black inferiority, *the Black church emerged as an institution that is valuable to and useful for Black people and for White people*. From the Black experience, the Black church offers profound theology related to “life and death, suffering and sorrow, love and judgment, grace and hope, justice and mercy” (McClain, 1990, p. 46). McClain (1990) describes, “European-oriented worship services are generally shorter, more rigid in worship form, less emotional. And the music less spontaneous” (p. 50). The Black church offers exuberant and emotive styles of worship that pervaded early Methodism, which many White and some Black United Methodists have abandoned (Brooks, 2012).

Yet, the Black church offers a concern for liberation “*for all human beings*” [italics mine] (Williams, 1993, p. xiv). The Black church advocates for shared authority, autonomy, and agency for all persons. Not only should Black church principles not be suppressed among Black Methodists, *these principles should*

be embraced by White Methodists to address existential predicaments for them as well.

Existential Freedom in Action

Blacks have an interpretive tradition that reflects their perception of race relations in the institutional church. While the interpretive tradition of Black persons is not as comprehensively documented as those in power, the hopes and pains of Black persons' early American experience have been preserved partly through Negro spirituals. West (1999) asserts:

The first *artistic gift* of Afro-Americans to the world—the spirituals—exemplify *existential freedom in action*. At the level of form, these “sorrow songs” contain subtle rhythmic elements alongside brooding melodies . . . Often confused with mere circumlocution and repetition, the lyrics and styles of the spirituals directly confront existential dread and despair with the armor of vocal virtuosity, rhythmic facility and faith in God. [italics mine] (pp. 436–437)

West declares that the Negro spirituals are a gift from Afro-Americans to the world. West illustrates how Afro-Americans maintained “somebodiness” through lyric and rhythm in the Negro spirituals. According to West, the Negro spirituals defy existential predicaments through expressed faith in God. McClain (1990) adds:

The Negro spirituals, which speak of life and death, suffering and sorrow, love and judgment, grace and hope, justice and mercy were born out of this tradition. They were songs of a people weary at heart. The Negro spirituals were the songs of an unhappy people; and, yet they are the most beautiful expressions of human experience. The music is more ancient than the words. These songs are the siftings of centuries, telling

of exile and trouble, of strife and hiding; they grope toward some unseen power and sigh for rest in the end. (p. 46)

As McClain describes, “Negro spirituals” is not just a genre of music for Black persons. These were expressions that flowed from the heart of a weary people searching for rest. The Negro spirituals reflect an attitude of resistance among Negro Christians and reveal their desires to be valued.

Raboteau (1978) suggests these expressions were an extension of African heritage transformed into their exile setting. Exiled Africans expressed their desires that transcended their location and their assets. While Black persons recognized they did not have many material possessions in their mortal context, they anticipated heavenly relief and proclaimed:

Got a crown (harp, robe, slippers, Savior) in de kingdom, ain’t dat good news? I’m a-goin’ to lay down dis world, Goin’ to shoulder up mah cross, Goin’ to take it home to Jesus, ain’t dat good news? (Cleveland & Nix, 1981, p. 114)

While they did not define who would be “together,” they expressed a desire to gather and share sacred meals and worship experiences. They also suggest equality and a need for mercy among those who would be “together.” They sang:

Let us break bread [drink wine, praise God] together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun, Oh, Lord, have mercy on me. (Cleveland & Nix, 1981, p. 88)

They more explicitly declared their equality in other spirituals. Without needing to define who is included in their song, they affirmed, “He’s got the whole world [including those enslaved and those who enslaved] in His hands” (Cleveland & Nix, 1981, p. 114). Negro spirituals reflect tradition that hoped for equality and inclusivity, even if they had to wait for a kingdom beyond their lifetime.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was perceived as an unofficial spokesperson for Black persons in America. Just as those who penned the Scriptures envisioned an inclusive movement that would continue what Jesus initiated, King shared a vision for a “beloved community” in the U.S. society more than two millennia after Africans arrived on the continent. King (1963) declared:

I have a dream that one day . . . the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood (para. 18) . . . little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. (para. 21)

Black Americans largely celebrated Dr. King and his dream. However, four years later, Dr. King (1967) evaluated his own speech, calling it a “nightmare.” King (1967) critiqued, “some of the old optimism was a little superficial and now it must be tempered with a solid realism.” King did not define “solid realism” and shifted his attention towards the topic of war. While King’s self-reflection negated the “superficial” nature of the dream, still the dream was broadly received and celebrated among Blacks. Almost five decades later, King’s dream remains

deferred. Unfortunately, the racial composition of homogenous local congregations in the United States, including The United Methodist Church, does not reflect the splendor of the Church presented in the Scriptures or re-presented by Dr. King. *The institutional church's inadequate response is offensive and sinful.*

Counter-Frame and Home-Culture Frame

Raboteau (1978) describes the invisible church as a dynamic institution that developed into a way of being for exiled Africans in America. According to Bell (1987), the institution of slavery and the institution of the [White] church provided, “. . . convenient means of perpetuating the primary aim: the dominance of whites over blacks in every important aspect of life” (p. 112). From this setting, Blacks would “steal away” to the brush harbors to escape the daily experiences of being degraded and whipped by “humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Douglas, 1845/2003, pp. 73–75). *The Black church is about more than style and preference.* Raboteau (1978) imparts:

One of the most durable and adaptable constituents of the slave's culture, linking African past with African present, was his (*sic.*) religion . . . African styles of worship, forms of ritual, systems of belief, and fundamental perspectives have remained vital on this side of the Atlantic, not because they were preserved in a “pure” orthodoxy but because they were transformed. (p. 4)

In addition, McClain (1990) reflects, “It is somewhat ironic that these dark descendants of Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine and other great African intellectuals who worked out the basic political and theological doctrines

of the Western church were to have to form new communions” (p. 41). Black womanist Delores S. Williams (1993) further elaborates, “Evidently slaves thought an environment supporting solitude and reflection was conducive to gaining a true connection with Jesus and to strengthening the kind of God-consciousness needed to support their journeys through life” (p. 113).

The invisible church emerged as an “anti-oppression counter-frame” and a “home-culture frame” against the dominant white racial frame (Feagin, 2010, p. 19). As a home-culture, enslaved exiled Blacks advanced a counter frame through which the invisible church provided them safe space, or unrestrictive sanctuary, and in which the congregants could experience hope, authority, agency, autonomy, and love without being restricted by external persons, organizational structures, or social frameworks. One of the dissertation interviewees, **Mrs. Courts**, reminisced:

My daddy would clean up the church on Saturday. And he would take me and I would help. I would help dust the benches and whatever. And Ma would, Ma would fix sandwiches and sell sandwiches up, trying to help raise money that she couldn't afford to pay, because certain things needed to be done at church . . . So, then, you're supposed to have your little bit in there helping. You're supposed to be helping. Don't let somebody else be out there helping you to do better when you're not going to help yourself do better. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

As Mrs. Courts described, the Black church served as a center to galvanize help from and for community support. Black people developed a particular pride and took particular care for maintaining their church facilities, which symbolizes the value that they assigned to their home culture.

The invisible church birthed songs, liturgies, preaching styles, theological emphases, and ecclesiology that were unique to the Black experience, which also provided an anti-oppression counter-frame. Concerning liturgy, the entire church participated in the worship experience. McClain (1990) notes “Black people go in search of a church where there is some spirit and where exuberant ejaculations of ‘Thank you, Jesus,’ ‘Praise God!’ ‘Preach!’ and ‘Amen!’ are not considered to be overreaction of superstitious simple folk or religious revelry” (p. 50). Concerning preaching style, Black preaching emerged as more energetic and rhythmic than White preaching. McClain (1990) describes Black preaching as biblical, prophetic, poetic, dialogical, didactic/inspiring, matter of fact, slow and deliberate to a build-up, using dramatic pause, relating to life and the life situations of the congregations, and containing elements of hope and optimism. Along with Black preaching, Black music had and has a unique sound (McClain, 1990) and specific messages.

West observes Black church practices and emphases considering the existential dimension. West (1999) expounds:

Existential freedom in black Christianity flows from the kinetic orality and affective physicality inherited from West African cultures and religions. This full-fledged acceptance of the body deems human existence a source of joy and gaiety . . . Rhythmic singing, swaying, dancing, preaching, talking and walking—all features of black life—are weapons of struggle and survival . . . The individual stylistic vocals assert the sense of “somebodiness” in a situation that denies one’s humanity. (p. 436)

In the Black church, Black people collectively experience freedom unlike any in other establishment in American society. The “singing, swaying, dancing, preaching, talking, and walking” that occur in the Black church are *instruments of subversion* through which Black persons maintain joy in spite of oppression and exile. These Black bodies in motion in the Black church demonstrate that “we are somebody.”

Black Liberation and Reconciliation Theology

Black theology, in general, and Black liberation theology, in particular, was broadly publicized and introduced to many in mainstream America for the first time in 2008 during the presidential election due to then-candidate Barack Obama and his association with Rev. Jeremiah Wright, who became the voice and face of Black liberation theology. Black liberation theology was harshly critiqued and largely dismissed as divisive and anti-American.

On the contrary, Black scholars in the U.S. have developed diverse systems of theological responses, Black theologies, within their contexts of pain, suffering, and exile. Black theologies speak to concerns which other systems of theology may not address in the same way. Black theologies addressed the “What shall we do with Black people?” question from an African American cultural lens. More specifically, they address, “What shall Black people do with Black people?” and “What shall Black people do with White people?” They offer Black people in the American culture a lens through which to understand and navigate their journeys through a culture with a dominant White racial frame.

Black theologies offer frames of reference for Black people to endure oppression and exile experiences while holding on to God-consciousness. They also offer White Christians a different perspective through which reconciliation among race groups can be more meaningful and substantive.

Black reconciliation theology places emphasis on the “What Black persons shall do with White persons?” question. About racial estrangement, Rivers (1997) insists, “Ultimately what we are addressing is a spiritual problem that is mediated through mechanisms of domination that have institutionalized themselves and reproduced themselves at every level of this society” (p. 15). In relation to this problem, J. Deotis Roberts (1971/2005), a primary representative of reconciliation theology declares, “Christianity is rooted in the belief that ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Godself’ (2 Cor. 5:19)” (p. 9). *Black reconciliation theology envisions God facilitating community where Black and White persons share hearts, hands, space, time, language, financial resources, personnel, stories, traditions, interpretive frameworks, authority, and experiences.* Nevertheless, as Powe (2009) suggests, “The problem with a reconciliation model is it provides an avenue for Euro-Americans to set the agenda for African Americans within a black cultural context where whiteness defines power” (p. 72). Black persons should not surrender identity, agency, and autonomy nor ignore their past story or present collective context for the sake of desegregating, integrating, or just sharing physical space.

Reconciliation should be more comprehensive than desegregation or integration, which assumes assimilation. Roberts (1971/2005) distinguishes, “Integration is a goal set by whites over blacks, even blacks with superior education and experience to whites under whom they must live and serve” (p. 95). Reconciliation without liberation is superficial and imprudent. On the other hand, liberation without reconciliation does not decrease the physical, emotional, economic, material, psychological, or theological space between Blacks and Whites.

Black liberation theology speaks comprehensively to what Black people should do with Black people. Black reconciliation theology speaks comprehensively to what Black people should do with White people. *Black liberation and reconciliation theologies can together offer insight for Black people and White people to transform race relations.* Roberts (1971/2005) presents liberation and reconciliation in concert, reporting “*Liberation and reconciliation* are the two main poles of Black Theology. They are not antithetical” [italics mine] (p. 8) and “The gospel is a *reconciling* as well as a *liberating* gospel, and Christ is at once *Liberator* and *Reconciler*” [italics mine] (p. ix). Roberts (1971/2005) further explains that reconciliation between God and humans can be affected only through reconciliation between persons. Roberts advocates for reconciliation, which requires liberation of the oppressed.

Roberts (1971/2005) also demands, “Reconciliation requires repentance, forgiveness, and cross-bearing” (p. xiv). The institutional church cannot arc

across a history and a present context of oppression and exile into authentic meaningful racial social harmony. Jennings (1997) recognizes, “There has been the involvement of the theological enterprise (such as the writing and teaching of theology in church and school) in forming or supporting structures of slavery, racial oppression, violence and death in societies” (p. 40). Ignoring these structures and this theological enterprise would be superficial and disingenuous. Black persons’ resources are still restricted. Their narratives are still bound. Their liturgies, songs, and theologies are still tied up. Black persons have to experience liberation before they can be reconciled with those who formerly oppressed them. Black persons must be *untied* (see Footnote 1, page 1) before they can be *united*.

The need for liberation assumes tension between oppressors and oppressed. Rivers presents a possible source for Black oppressed persons refusing to confront White oppressors. Rivers (1997) suggests:

First, we in the black church have lied to you white people [and to ourselves]. Most of us don’t want to offend you, so we don’t tell you what we really think. We smile and are congenial, hoping we might get some money out of you. (p. 19)

Exchanging autonomy and agency for the possibility of financial support is a self-imposed sham. In spite of possibly losing financial support, oppressed persons should continue to advocate for equity in autonomy and agency for the sake of those who are oppressed and for the sake of the oppressors.

Once a reasonable distribution of autonomy and agency is established, those who were once estranged have to determine what to do with the relationship. While addressing the questions for Black people “What shall we do with Black people?” and “What shall we do with White people?” Black theologians also offer a response for Whites to consider in addressing “What shall we do with Black people?” White persons need to be liberated, or *untied*, as much as Black persons. One of this dissertation’s interviewees, **Rev. Johnson**, a White pastor of a multi-ethnic congregation, recognized:

Reality is that a person of color’s experience in our culture is different from a White person’s culture/experience. And so, you have to honor that. You have to honor the traditions that may be attached with that . . . [There are] differences about culture and the differences of privilege that go along with people with white skin. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Senses of entitlement and disdain for those without white skin often accompany the privilege of those who have white skin. Roberts (1971/2005) reasons, “*The black church, in setting black people free, may make freedom possible for white people as well. Whites are victimized as the sponsors of hate and prejudice which keeps racism alive*” [italics mine] (p. 33). White persons, too, must be *untied* before they can be *united*.

Roberts presents theological challenges perpetuated from *both racial groups* that require God’s intervention. Roberts (1971/2005) submits, “Whites cannot repent and blacks cannot forgive . . . They are open to the agency of divine grace and power” (p. 61). Potter (1997) adds:

First, white evangelicals must die to the myths of American origins and must honestly face the reality that *our republic was born in sin* . . . [African Americans] must die not only to a false notion of self that has been perpetrated by white supremacy but also to their own hubris that inhibits genuine forgiveness. [emphasis mine] (p. 35)

By the *grace of God*, White people shall repent and forsake the notion of White superiority and Black inferiority. By the *grace of God*, Black people shall forgive and forsake the inclination to flaunt a heritage of innocence. By the *grace of God*, Black people and White people shall reconcile.

Racial harmony? The calls for reconciliation generally assume that Black church experiences and interpretive traditions will be absorbed into White church. About those engaged in discourse related to reuniting traditional African American Methodist denominations with The United Methodist Church, Powe (2009) observes, “Not one of these individuals ever suggested that the UMC should dismantle and fold into one of the other denominations” (p. 119), which is a sign of continued inequity. Considering what is at stake, desegregation and/or reconciliation may not appear to be an appealing proposition.

When public K–12 schools desegregated, the Black schools sacrificed buildings, professionals, resources, authority, and traditions in order to share academic space with many who aggressively expressed desires to be separated from them. The White schools were relatively unaffected during desegregation (Harris, 2012) apart from an influx of newcomers. Leon Hall (1979) declares, “[White schools] have decided to handle desegregation in a way that makes the price black communities must pay so high that black citizens themselves will stop

pushing for desegregation and ask: is it worth it?" (as cited in Cecelski, 1994, p. 171). Bell (1987) observes that segregation ". . . usually resulted in closing black schools, dismissing black teachers, and demoting (and often degrading) black principals . . . Black faculty, in all too many cases, became victims of that segregation" (p. 109). bell hooks's experience illustrates this phenomenon. hooks (1994) describes, "We had to give up the familiar and enter a world that seemed cold and strange, not our world, not our school. We were certainly on the margin, no longer at the center, and it hurt" (p. 24). **Rev. Douglas** recalled:

Riding busses for more than an hour, passing two or three White schools before I get to the Black school . . . I was one of few Blacks in my class, if there were more than one . . . So it was always me working as hard as I can to prove that I deserved to be in the front of the class. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

When Black schools were separate, they were unequal. While unequal, structures and supports in their separate spaces offered Black students meaning, belonging, and security (Emerson & Smith, 2000). While no desegregation effort has been made to a similar scale in the institutional church, Black local churches will likely suffer the same fate unless the likelihood of disproportionate sacrifice is intentionally addressed.

Certain African American generational subgroups may be more prone to reconciliation than others based on their American experience. African Americans born in the 1960s and after have been socialized to embrace desegregation/integration more readily (Powe, 2012). While they made

significant contributions in the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans who were born before 1960, particularly those from the Black Consciousness Generation, may not be as interested in reconciliation based on their Black experiences in America (Powe, 2012). According to Powe (2012), the focus of African Americans from the Black Consciousness Generation “*shifted from a strong emphasis on interracial cooperation to black empowerment*” [italics mine] (p. 12). Their experiences may reasonably generate feelings of mistrust towards Whites and pride about their accomplishments, which may prohibit feelings of excitement about prospects of reconciliation. From a White person’s perspective born during the same era, **Mrs. Matthews**, a White woman who is a member of a multi-ethnic congregation, pondered:

But I think that the, the obstacle has been the older generations, we grew up that way. It’s very hard to change. But it’s the, as we get younger, and, and society begins to change, it’s gonna be much easier. I think that’s one of the obstacles. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Even if their experiences and feelings could be fully suppressed; processes, structures, values, and practices still operate in The United Methodist Church that are not equitable to African Americans.

Reconciliation loses meaning if sharing space requires abandonment of identity(ies). Some theologians who advocate for reconciliation suggest that race identities should be suppressed for racial harmony to prevail. Jennings (1997) declares:

We need a church made up of people who refuse to live out racial politics, who refuse to participate in the racial realities of this nation, who refuse the power and privileges of whiteness, who reject the stereotypes of blackness, who claim in a new way of life born at the cross and the resurrection, who will not be known even by family, tribe, friends or nation after the flesh, but who would know themselves only through the power of the resurrection and the call of the cross of Christ. (p. 48)

Potter (1997) adjoins, “Before a renewed humanity can come into being, both groups must place themselves at the foot of the cross and literally die to whatever they have been in the past” (p. 35). Can race reconciliation be accomplished apart from surrendering “family, tribe, friends or nation” (Jennings, 1997, p. 35) or “literally dying” (Potter, 1997, p. 48) to identities of the past?

The calls to dismiss race identity issued by some advocates for reconciliation will *require Black persons to surrender autonomy and agency, while White identities will be relatively unscathed. Racial harmony should not be accomplished at the expense of race identity*—or any other form of identity.

Race is more substantive than skin complexion. Race cannot and should not be dismissed, even in space shared by representatives of different race groups.

The Black church and Black theology offers responses to existential predicaments for Black persons and White persons navigating through American society (West, 1999). Black persons and White persons sharing space should find ways to promote racial harmony that does not diminish the identity(ies) of those who occupy space together.

For reconciliation to be meaningful, it must occur between equal parties.

Rivers (1997) argues, “the language and the rhetoric of reconciliation—divorced

from a commitment to truth and justice is a sham” (p. 14). There has to be an invitation from an equal party and a voluntary surrender from an other equal party. Roberts reveals a complication for the process of racial reconciliation. Roberts (1971/2005) directs, “To arrive at this goal [reconciliation between equals] we may need to withdraw for a time from institutional expressions of racism, even within the visible church” (p. 33). How does the work of gaining equality correspond to the work of reconciliation? Can liberation and reconciliation work be done concurrently?

Perhaps the absence of Black persons in White churches signifies liberation work in progress. Perhaps Blacks have returned to the invisible church or are boycotting the traditional visible White church in actuality, even if unintentionally, to progress towards equality. According to Roberts (1971/2005), the interchange between repentance and forgiveness can be actualized through *allowing Blacks to write the agenda for their liberation, maintaining communications* between Blacks and Whites even while equality is being gained, Whites curbing and redirecting White power, and being open to the possibility that substantive reconciliation may require a discontinuity of the old and an emergence of a new social order. Nevertheless, as Blacks move towards equality, the hope of reconciliation among equals must remain in scope.

Conclusion

What shall Black persons in The United Methodist Church do? Continuing in un-critical non-consciousness (see Footnote 4, page 12) is not sustainable in a

social structure that alienates and oppresses. Regardless of how much either group is willing to progress towards reconciliation, unfortunately, the White racial frame persists within The United Methodist Church in the American context. African Americans continue to go to United Methodist meetings and events as the only African American or one of very few African Americans present. They will be expected to represent the voice of all African Americans. If they disagree, they will be perceived as angry by Whites present. If they uncritically affirm the words and actions of the White sponsoring body, they will be critiqued by their African American peers as hypocritical and/or sellouts. Resources are still distributed unequally. Leadership roles are still assigned without equity. Surveying the Black experience in The United Methodist Church within the American context, apparently the Black church home-culture frame and anti-oppression counter frame are still relevant. “What shall African Americans do about reconciliation in The United Methodist Church in the American context?”

The nature and mission of the Church demands intervention against the offenses that contradict who the Church is called to be. The Protestant Christian canon, Methodist tradition, and Black tradition call for reconciliation. While historic and contemporary treatments of Black persons are largely inconsistent with Scripture and tradition, the hope of experiencing God’s forgiving and empowering grace and God’s liberating love for the whole of creation (Alexander, 2012) is worth pursuing for the sake of humanity. About humanity, Deddo (1997) declares, “*Relationship is essential and internal to divine and human existence . .*

. Humanity has its existence in and through personal relations” [Italics mine] (p. 59) and “In Christ no human is my enemy. All are neighbors” (p. 67).

To push for desegregation may result in Blacks physically being together with Whites, but unequal and without the Black church’s responses to existential predicaments that were available in the separate spaces—e.g., meaning, belonging, security (Emerson & Smith, 2000), and “somebodiness” (West, 1999). An alternative to pushing for desegregation and sacrificing resources for Blacks is being un-critical and non-conscious towards *irreconciliation*, which is also unacceptable. A more equitable alternative is for Black and White Christians sharing in a “beloved community” in which exchanges of forgiveness, unity, affirmation, justice, and liberating love represent the dominant ethic. In this “beloved community,” Black persons and White persons can benefit from the profound and practical responses to existential predicaments offered by African American interpretive traditions and community.

CHAPTER III

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS?

*Blessed be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.*
—John Fawcett 1782

Introduction

One of the most significant dilemmas with which Americans have struggled since its formation is in relationships among persons with different race interpretive communities and traditions. While race can be superficially identified by skin complexion, it more profoundly reflects separate social orders constructed in separate social contexts. *Historically the generally White American elite has benefited from class and race advantages.* Those of African descent—my personal identity—and other peoples of color have consistently and systematically been denied power. The elite of European descent systematically enslaved, denied civil rights, legally segregated, and discriminated against those of African descent. Even now, many consider the differences between the races to be irreconcilable. To others, those who are of different races should be blind to color and move forward without regard to the past. Still others hope for reconciliation, but recognize the need to address the racial dilemma for more meaningful race relations.

Contemporary Americans are not the first to critically assess the dissonance between races. Those in power struggled with how to respond to former slaves at the end of American slavery. African American United Methodist Scholar, Frederick Douglass Powe (2009), explains:

Free African Americans were not slaves, so they could not be forced into labor, but they were not equal to exercise their rights in society. The problem this created in the North for many Euro-Americans was what to do with a group of people who were segregated from the benefits of white society. (p. 15)

In 1865, during his “What the Black Man Wants” speech, Frederick Douglass, a licensed Methodist preacher (Walls, 1974), framed the question succinctly, “What shall we do with the Negro?” (Douglass, 1865/1976, p. 164), presenting a former slave’s perspective to the American race discourse.

Nearly a century and a half later, the conundrum remains. The history of racism continues to plague many American institutions, including the institutional church and The United Methodist Church, whose nature and mission has love, truth, and reconciliation as central tenets. United Methodist Scholar, Michael G. Cartwright (1999) adds:

Indeed, I would argue that, in part, the contemporary ecclesiological problematic facing United Methodists in American culture at the end of the twentieth century is entangled with the complex question of how to assess the conflicting legacies of the nineteenth-century disciplinary practices [among African American Methodists and Euro-American Methodists]. (p. 126)

Though the language has changed, finding space for Black persons or African Americans in America, in the American church, and in The United Methodist Church (UMC) can still pose a problem. What shall we do with African Americans in the 21st Century?

In *Chapter III*, I address the un-critical non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) posture towards racial *irreconciliation* taken by many in the institutional church, in particular, and in society, in general. I offer a response to “What has been done with African Americans?” through analyses of historical and institutional racism in three parts. Through exploring the racial climate in the U.S., in Part I of this chapter “The Historic and Present Racial Climate in American Society,” I offer a historical analysis of race relations in the institutional church and in society. In Part II “Historical and Institutional Black/White *Irreconciliation*,” I extract insights from the segregation/desegregation/re-segregation experiments of school system(s) in the U.S. to help establish the present racial social context and inform race reconciliation movement. In Part III “Historical and Institutional Black/White *Irreconciliation* in The United Methodist Church in America,” I analyze statements of commitments of theorists (seminaries and theological schools) and practitioners (Annual Conferences; see Footnote 2, page 4) of The United Methodist Church.

Part I. The Historic and Present Racial Climate in American Society

The United Methodist Church was not formed in a vacuum, but developed as part of a larger *untied* culture. **Rev. Douglas** observed, “This ‘yet to be’

United States has the same issue” (personal interview, 2013, July 25) as the “yet to be” *United Methodist Church*. The United States has an embarrassing history of race relations, particularly considering the displacement of indigenous peoples, the importation and enslavement of Africans, the segregation between Whites and African Americans enforced by brutality, and the exploitation and criminalization of Latino/a and Hispanic immigrants.

Feagin (2010) reminds about American history, “Few people realize that for *more than 85 percent* of our history we were grounded in, and greatly shaped by, extensive slavery and comprehensive legal segregation” (p. 1). Those in power established processes, systems, and institutions to sustain these injustices. Prior to emancipation, slave “masters” had methods to ensure that the enslaved did not transgress the established social order. Former enslaved American Frederick Douglass (1845/2003) recalls:

The maxim [of Rev. Daniel Weeden, minister in the Reformed Methodist Church] was, Behave well or behave ill, it is the duty of a master occasionally to whip a slave, to remind him of his master’s authority. Such was his theory, and such was his practice. (p. 73)

Prior to successes from the Civil Rights Movement, “Whites Only” and “Coloreds Only” signs were prevalent during the Jim Crow era, signifying where members of particular racial categories were designated to share space and resources. Those who transgressed were derided, beaten, jailed, and/or murdered.

These extensive and comprehensive realities impacted social relations between Blacks and Whites, among Whites, and among Blacks beyond the eras

in which they were prevalent. Feagin (2010) and Powe (2009) propose that during these eras and beyond, Whites, who controlled political, media, and educational networks, advanced a sense of innate White superiority and Black inferiority, using terms like “moral, intelligent, rational, attractive, or hardworking” (Feagin, 2010, p. 96) to describe Whites and “violent, criminal, unintelligent, lazy and oversexed . . . apes and monkeys” (Feagin, 2010, p. 104) to describe Black Americans. Feagin (2010) presents perspectival frames, which Americans of color have used and continue to use to survive in these realities: 1) Anti-oppression counter-frames and 2) home-culture frames. *These frames provided Americans of color a way to escape from a reality of derision, oppression, and racial battle fatigue into a reality of liberation, acceptance, and hope.* While physical segregation may no longer be a legal reality, the White perspectival frames and the counter-frames have supported social, psychological, ecclesial, and spatial separation.

The “What shall be done with African Americans?” question has not been adequately addressed in American society. Many in 21st Century America want to claim or to move towards a post-racial America without any significant disruption of the present social order. However, whether consciously or non-consciously (see Footnote 4, page 12), critically or uncritically, those who inherited power or oppression based on race identities also inherited values, frames, processes, systems, and institutions which sustain injustices. Feagin (2010) portrays:

Today, most African Americans have to live everyday lives that are to a substantial degree geographically or socially segregated, substantially because of the critical choices made by elite and rank-and-file whites in the past and present to separate and subordinate them. (p. 130)

Feagin (2010) continues, “A majority of whites live in very white worlds and rarely interact, especially on a sustained equal status basis, with people of color. Typically, white interactions with people of color are superficial or limited” (p. 216). Emerson and Smith (2000) report that 90 percent of church-going African Americans attend predominantly Black congregations and at least 95 percent of church-going White Americans—and probably higher—attend white churches. Further, Alexander (2010/2012) describes the Jim Crow system as a “racial caste system” (p. 3) and establishes a convincing case that a less candid “well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow” (p. 4) remains and forces African Americans into a segregated second-class citizenship [or non-citizenship] through mass incarceration in the United States. Emerson and Smith (2000) catalogue how racial divisions also permeate other systems and institutions in American society, including marital, residential, economic, music expressions, television viewing patterns, and religious affiliation. *Though manifested in less overt forms, the Jim Crow era extends into the 21st Century.*

Part II. Historical and Institutional Black/White Irreconciliation

Public Schooling for African American Students in America

The American educational experiment has consistently been catastrophic for African American students. Carter G. Woodson (1933) suggests that the purpose of education is not “the mere imparting of information” (p. 4), but “to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better” (p. 24). Henry A. Giroux (2011) asserts that education is fundamental to democracy and that the task of education is to produce “citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way” (p. 3). This type of citizenry is vital to a democratic society. Johnson, Musial, Hall, Gollnick, and Dupuis (2008) add that the purposes of schools that are most often mentioned by educators and the general public include preparing students for citizenship, preparing students for the workforce, offering students a strong academic background, providing opportunities for students to develop their social skills, and helping students learn the importance of patriotism and loyalty. Unfortunately, the public schools and higher education systems do not subscribe to these ideals for all of its constituents and/or have *failed miserably concerning African American students*.

Inspiring socially responsible citizens who make life better for others is an admiral goal, which assumes literacy. Unfortunately, the American educational systems have grossly missed the literacy target concerning African Americans. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012), for 2010, 52% of

African American males completed high school in four years (para. 1). Further, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), in 2003, only 2% of the Black population read at a proficient level. Along with either a different understanding of its purpose than Woodson (1933), Giroux (2011), or Johnson et al (2008) or with a failure to meet its purpose, the educational systems' concept of a citizenry does not appear to benefit African Americans.

Some African Americans navigate successfully through the educational systems. Woodson (1933) describes those who succeeded the educational systems in his context as “mis-educated and of no service to themselves and none to the white man” and trained to defend the system that perfectly enslaved them (p. 20). Douglass, as cited in Meyer (1984) contends, “As we have frequently urged on the platform and elsewhere, prejudice is not the creature of birth, but of education” (p. 270). He further argues:

The evils of separate colored [*sic.*] schools are obvious to the common sense of all. Their very tendency is to produce feelings of superiority in the minds of white children, and a sense of inferiority in those of colored [*sic.*] children; thus producing pride on the one hand, and servility on the other, and making those who would be the best of friends the worst of enemies. (pp. 269–270)

Over a century after Douglass's death and nearly eight decades after Woodson's writings, African Americans continue to have educational needs and challenges that are unmet by the American educational systems. African Americans are not adequately prepared as they enter the educational systems, are mistreated within the systems, are expelled from or drop out of the systems, and/or graduate

from the systems being ill-prepared for socially responsible citizenship. Many of those who navigate successfully through the systems develop ideologies that support contending for arrangements within the market-oriented culture that most improves their personal conditions, while disregarding and/or damaging others who are less mis-educated.

Historically, African American students have not received significant consideration by the education systems' decision-makers in America. According to Woodson (1915), laws were passed in some states that prohibited teaching African Americans (p. 8). The educational systems that provided education to African Americans "justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching" (Woodson, 1933, p. 5) and dismissed the African American as a non-entity (Woodson, 1933). While decades have passed since such monstrosities were overtly practiced, significant systemic adjustments to de-construct such ideologies have not been made. Jennings and Lynn's (2005) discussion of cultural reproduction informs, "School norms contribute to the systematic exclusion of ethnic minorities and poor whites from the educational system" (p. 19). The challenge for African American students is to develop into responsible democratic citizenry through institutions that were designed as sponsors for and that developed through *years of blatant systematic exclusion, dismissal, oppression, and destruction*.

Beginning with the initial arrangements, educational systems have not been favorable towards developing a socially responsible African American

citizenry or towards developing African American citizens who were well-prepared to contribute substantively in a moral general citizenry. As industrial, economic, and technological priorities increased and the perceived need for global competitiveness increased in the U.S. social economy, educational systems continued to develop using pedagogical approaches that did not generally encourage critical thinking, which further reduced the likelihood that African Americans would be adequately prepared for socially responsible democracy. In his critique of the forces of neoliberalism, Giroux (2011) explains how national political administrations embraced versions of education with the central goal:

To promote economic growth and global competitiveness, which entailed a much-narrowed form of pedagogy that focused on memorization, high-stakes testing, and helping students find a good fit within a wider market-oriented culture of commodification, standardization, and conformity. (p. 8)

This movement in educational systems led to the best “good fits” being generally reserved for those of upper socioeconomic status, who are introduced early to language, processes, and persons directly associated to the market-oriented culture. These students are educated to be producers and to continue the advancement of the market-oriented culture.

African American students enter the educational system with less familiarity of the materials associated with the market. While observing vocabulary development of children, Hart and Risley (1999) report that the families in the upper socioeconomic status used 2,153 words per hour versus

616 words per hour used in families who received assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). All of the families observed who received AFDC assistance were African American. Hart and Risley (1999) further report consistent significant difference in cumulative vocabulary words, parent-child interaction, affirmatives/prohibitions, language diversity, and encouragements/discouragements. These children of families who received AFDC assistance, at best, are likely found to be potential “good fits” as consumers and as resources to be exploited by the market-oriented culture. They will likely be trained to perform rote processes that do not require critical engagement. As industrial and administrative processes are streamlined, automated, and mechanized, fewer “fits” are available. In fact, no “good fit” is found for many students, especially those among the lower socioeconomic status and those not in the majority race category.

Those for whom no “good fit” is found in this market-oriented culture, according to Giroux (2011), “no longer have available roles to play as producers or consumers” (p. 95). In a market-oriented culture, persons for whom the U.S. educational systems do not find a “good fit” for the market culture are perceived as disposable menaces. Their “good fit” is ultimately determined to be within the U.S. correctional and/or welfare systems. Giroux (2011) describes the conditions of young persons whose labor is unneeded as “increasingly subjected to policies and modes of governance defined through the logic of punishment, surveillance, and carceral control” (p. 91). *African Americans, in particular, are*

disproportionately subjected to the logic of punishment, surveillance, and carceral control. According to the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights:

- African-American students are over 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers who are white;
- African-American students represent 18% of students in the [Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)] sample, but 35% of students suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of students expelled;
- Over 70% of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American; and
- One in five African-American boys and more than one in ten African-American girls received an out-of-school suspension. (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, pp. 1–3)

These statistics could lead to a conclusion that African American students are violent, disruptive, and/or difficult to educate unless consideration is given to the needs and challenges of African American students that are not met. *The pretexts of social responsibility and public safety are invoked to justify the hegemonic policies of suspension, expulsion, and arrests.* Nevertheless, African Americans students are consistently stigmatized and punished for awkward navigation through systems that were not designed for their betterment and have historically and consistently failed to cultivate a sense of socially responsible democracy within African American students. Further, their conscious or non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) forms of resistance—e.g., dress, language, and group affiliations—against the foreign social frame that does not recognize the home-culture of African American students is often deemed disruptive and/or

criminal. Students who are consistently subjected to surveillance and punishment in the educational systems are mis-educated to transition effortlessly and non-consciously into correctional systems.

Shapiro (2006) informs, “*Indeed, it is a strange fact that the core curriculum of American schools has hardly changed in the past 50 years, despite the seismic changes in our culture*” [italics mine] (p. 100). Conventional pedagogical practices make learning spaces impersonal and alienate students from the prepackaged content, from the instructor, and from fellow learners. In his reflection about an awareness of the cultural divide that Black males sense at adolescence, Tatum (2005) declares, “Cynicism, self-loathing, despair, a retarded sense of one’s destiny, and frustration take on a life of their own when they penetrate black male childhood” (p. 8). Students’ informal and non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) resistances are seen as disruptive and violent and as disregard for personal responsibility. In response to these resistances, educators and administrators justify further militant authoritarianism, such as suspensions, expulsions, and arrests. Conventional pedagogical practices contribute to the challenges of African American students, who are tamed to assimilate into the majority culture, where African American common knowledge and experiences are invisible or absent, African American students’ resistive responses are met by militant authoritarianism, and African American students are excluded from democratic participation. African American students

tamed through educational systems that preserve conventional pedagogical approaches are *likely to drop out, be expelled, or graduate mis-educated*.

Those African American students who are *successfully mis-educated* and graduate through conventional pedagogical approaches may assimilate into the dominant culture. Mis-educated African Americans may have been sorted into “good fits” in the corporate and/or socioeconomic order. They may be celebrated for successfully depositing and withdrawing predetermined content. However, like the African American students who were unable to successfully negotiate through the conventional pedagogy, they too have unresolved knowledge and experiences with which they have not constructed meaning. Nor have they likely learned how to construct meaning with new knowledge and experiences that they encounter. They will still be subject to power differentials, injustices, and oppression in the dominant culture, as will their African American brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, neighbors, and children who were not as successfully mis-educated. Though they have received credentials and assumed personal responsibility, they will still be unable to readily assume democratic social responsibility.

In a society that ascribes power to the market to govern its citizens, how can educators and young people assume social responsibility to engage in substantive democracy? What if the educators and/or young people are African Americans, who have particular educational needs and challenges? African American students generally do not have the cultural preparation to enter the

educational systems at a level that is comparable to their white counterparts. Within the educational systems, African American students are perceived as difficult to teach because they do not have immediate access to the same cultural resources as their white counterparts, African American students' cultural knowledge and experiences are largely dismissed, and African American students are punished more severely and more often than their white counterparts. African American students exit the systems by *dropping out, being expelled, or graduating mis-educated*. The "What shall be done with African Americans?" question has not been adequately addressed in American school systems.

Part III. Historical and Institutional Black/White Irreconciliation in The United Methodist Church in America

III.A. Historic Methodism in Black and White

What has been done with African Americans in The United Methodist Church? A comprehensive critique of Black/White *irreconciliation* in The United Methodist Church should include an analysis of how the racial composition of local United Methodist churches developed and occurs. Like schooling systems in America, Methodism in the United States developed alongside the development of the nation, amongst slavery, legal segregation, and systematic oppression and marginalization. Early American Methodism was a movement of practical love, faith, and piety lived out under the mission "to reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land"

(Alexander, 2012, p. 49). Just like with the rest of the U.S. society, the question of what to do with Black people challenged the Methodist movement. Powe (2009) advises, "Slavery influenced the way blacks were incorporated into organized church life" (p. 2). Nevertheless, Methodists have generally been more just and humane than many other persons and entities in the U.S. population. The *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) admits, "African Americans participated actively in [Methodist beginnings] though much of that contribution was acknowledged without much biographical detail" (p. 12). Kirk (2009) reports, "Historical records indicate that Blacks were among the charter members of the very first 'Methodist Society' which was organized in Frederick County, Maryland in 1764" (p. 38). Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) inform that by 1795, there were 8,414 white members and 1,719 black members of Methodists societies in North Carolina. Gravely (2001) accounts that large biracial crowds gathered for Black Harry Hosier's exhortations. During slavery, many Methodists were abolitionists. Post slavery, while some in the United States opposed providing education to Black persons and legislation was passed in some states to prevent Black persons from being taught, Methodists taught Black persons and established schools and colleges for Black persons. During the Civil Rights era, many White Methodists stood in solidarity with Black persons through boycotts, sit-ins, rallies, Freedom Rides, and other expressions of resistance. Even now, The United Methodist Church provides financial support to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, provides scholarships to ethnic students, and has

established and recognizes special interest groups that advocate for racial justice. In general, the Methodist movement has been more just and humane than the White general public toward the Black population in the United States.

However, the Methodist response to the question of what to do with Black people has not been altogether just and humane. About the organizing conference of the Methodist movement in America in 1784, the *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) declares, “The conference took a forceful stance against slavery and made that witness a featured commitment in the new church’s Discipline. Regrettably the church steadily retreated from that courageous stand” (p. 13). Cartwright (1999) surmises that the early ecclesial leaders and other indigenous American Methodists did not have, “the moral imagination and political creativity to see how to maintain both spiritual and external bonds with African American Methodists in the midst of slavery” (p. 110). Douglass illustrates the contradictions of being White and Christian in the American slavery context. While Douglass’s experience may not reflect the totality of Black/White Methodist relations, Douglass captures contradictions that were present and substantive just decades after Methodism began in America. Douglass (1845/2003) narrates:

In August, 1832, my master attended a Methodist camp-meeting held in Bay-side, Talbot county, and there experienced religion. I indulged a faint hope that his conversion would lead him to emancipate his slaves, and that, if he did not do this, it would, at any rate, make him more kind and humane. I was disappointed in both these respects. It neither made him to be humane to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his character, it made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways; for I

believe him to have been a much worse man after his conversion than before. Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty. (p. 56)

Douglass hoped that the practical love, faith, and piety and the scriptural holiness that was being spread throughout the land would make a substantive difference in his “master,” which would translate to more humane treatment for him. Unfortunately, conversion through a Methodist camp-meeting provided his master “godly” rationale to extend even more cruelty to his slaves. Douglass (1845/2003) continues:

He very soon distinguished himself among his brethren, and was soon made a class leader and exhorter. His activity in revivals was great, and he proved himself an instrument in the hands of the church in converting many souls. His house was the preachers’ home. They used to take great pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed them. (p. 56)

The contradictions between his “master’s” Methodism and his cruelty towards his slaves disturbed Douglass. His master’s *duplicity was not an abstraction, but was expressed in very real ways* for Douglass. Douglass seemed to be unnerved at how his master could rise in prominence in Methodism and maintain his inhumane practices. How could his master be such a gracious host to his fellow Methodists and a tyrant to Douglass?

Douglass witnessed contradictions in other Methodists besides his master. Douglass (1845/2003) recounts:

It was necessary to keep our religious masters unacquainted with the fact, that, instead of spending the Sabbath in wrestling, boxing, and drinking whisky, we were trying to learn how to read the will of God; for they had much rather seen us engaged in those degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings. My blood boils as I think of the bloody manner in which Messrs. Wright Fairbanks and Garrison West, both class-leaders, in connection with many others, rushed in on us with sticks and stones, and broke up our virtuous little Sabbath school, at St. Michael's—all calling themselves Christians! humble [*sic.*] followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! (p. 75)

Douglass and his associates had to live out their scriptural holiness surreptitiously for fear that White Methodists would exact violent punishment on them for their piety. It seemed inconceivable to Douglass that “Christians” and “followers of the Lord Jesus Christ” would be so adamant towards keeping others from partaking in the scriptural holiness that they were spreading across the land.

Kirk (2009) reasons, “If the early Methodist societies had become [authentic communities of believers in Christ], then the whole subsequent history of relations between UMC Whites and UMC Blacks would have evolved in a dramatically different way” (p. 40). That Methodist societies were not altogether “authentic communities of believers in Christ” became apparent within decades of the beginning of the Methodist movement in the New World. The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized in 1784, and by 1789, “colored” members were reported to be in 36 of the 51 churches (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011, p. 13). Black persons came in large numbers to hear a Black Methodist, Richard Allen, preach at the St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia. The presence of Black congregants and White congregants

worshipping together generated various levels of comfort among White and Black congregants (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011). St. George Methodist Church did not have a sustainable response to the question “What shall we do with the Black congregants?”

The White members of St. George Methodist Church began to entertain the possibility of segregating the Black Methodists. Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) explain, “Blacks became more receptive [to segregation] after some officials at St. George told Allen, Absalom Jones, and William White that they could no longer pray at the altar” (p. 15). This led to the founding of the Bethel African Methodist Church in 1794 and the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination in 1816 (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011). The increase in numbers of Black congregants posed a similar problem at the John Street Methodist Church in New York, resulting in the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination in 1822 (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011).

While the African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches increased in number and spread beyond their founding regions, some Black congregants remained in the Methodist Episcopal Church. *The presence of Black congregants and the issue of slavery produced much tension within the Methodist Episcopal Church.* Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) assert, “The economic interests of the southern Methodist were becoming more important than any moral qualms about slavery” (p. 16), which led to a division between the “Methodist Episcopal Church” in the North and the “Methodist

Episcopal Church, South” in the South in 1844 (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011, p. 22). In 1870, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South authorized its Black constituents to form the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which is now the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011). Subsequently, Black congregants remained only in the Methodist Episcopal Church of the North.

In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church reconciled with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and united with the Methodist Protestant Church to form The Methodist Church. While maintaining an episcopal polity, Episcopal was no longer part of the denominational name. A result of this union was the formation of a segregated Central Jurisdiction that included all Black Methodists (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011) in their own governing body within The Methodist Church. Bishop Woodie W. White (2010) recalls:

Since the racially structured Central Jurisdiction was created in 1939 by the merger of The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church South, and The Methodist Protestant Church, it had been a source of controversy in the denomination. Its creation was nearly unanimously opposed by Black Methodists. (n.p.)

As White Methodists reunited in 1939, Black Methodists were exiled. Though Black Methodists initially opposed being exiled, they adjusted and remained loosely connected with The Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren in 1968 to form The United Methodist Church. This merger eliminated the Central

Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church, bringing the Black clergy and Black churches into a measure of inclusion in The United Methodist Church (Kirk, 2009). Black congregants of The Methodist Church approached the return from exile with cautious optimism. Gilbert H. Caldwell (2010) explains:

Even as the Central Jurisdiction was being merged/dissolved, many of us were concerned that our history, our cultural experience, and the uniqueness of our particular pilgrimage as displaced Africans would be ignored or lost forever . . . we were not sure that the efforts directed toward merger were being carried out for the right reasons. We were not sure that the motivation for merger represented authentic commitment to a receiving of the spirituality, culture, and creative organizational practices of African American Methodists. (n.p.)

Black Methodists in The United Methodist Church had to be cautious when they were exiled and when they returned from exile.

In the two centuries of Methodist history in the United States, *Black Methodists were excluded, segregated, and exiled*. Local churches were formed with White compositions and Black compositions. While the segregated Black jurisdiction was dissolved at a macro level, at the local church level, Black and White congregations remain *irreconciled*. Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) explain: “It has been difficult to attract black young men to enter the ministry and to return to the North Carolina or Western North Carolina conferences. Many Black United Methodists believe that the two conferences are not inclusive, except on paper” (p. 96). Emerson and Smith (2000) illustrate what paper inclusivity may look like:

Some of the white elite evangelicals attempted reconciliation, but incompletely. The problem with whites' conception of reconciliation, many claimed, was that they did not seek true justice—that is, justice both individually and collectively. Without this component, reconciliation was cheap, artificial, and mere words. It was rather like a big brother shoving his little brother to the ground, apologizing, and then shoving him to the ground again. (p. 58)

Until 1968 the prevailing Methodist response to the question of what to do with the Black population has been to segregate them, metaphorically shoving them to the ground. Powe (2009) perceives, “the merger did not address the issue of two existing churches within one denomination . . . The merger ended the explicit racism created by the Central Jurisdiction, but it did not end the separation of the races” (p. xv). Since then, the common perception of Black United Methodists is that inclusion is only on paper, metaphorically shoving them to the ground again. Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) ask, “Why did some blacks remain . . . ?” and respond, “*We can surmise that they remained because they believed in an inclusive Church . . . they chose to stay and make their Church an inclusive Church again*” (pp. 25–26). While that may not remain as the prevailing rationale for Black United Methodists, it is a part of the heritage to which Black United Methodists can re-connect and invite White United Methodists to share.

III.B. Contemporary Untied Methodists

The United Methodist Church expresses disdain for social injustices related to race and affirms inclusivity on paper. *The Book Discipline of the United Methodist Church* laments, “Racism plagues and cripples our growth in

Christ, inasmuch it is antithetical to the gospel itself” (Alexander, 2012, p. 117)

and acknowledges:

We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God’s grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to all people. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables [*sic.*] all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. (p. 99)

On denominational and regional levels, The United Methodist Church has established committees and boards (e.g., Committee on Race and Religion) and recognizes special interest groups (e.g., Black Methodists for Church Renewal) that advocate for racial justice. These groups have worked to ensure that ethnic groups are proportionately represented as church officials and as board and committee members on regional and denominational levels. However, no mechanism is in place to address segregation at the local church level. In fact, as Emerson and Smith (2000) say about the general institutional church, “From our perspective, religion, in the context of a racialized society, accentuates group boundaries, divisions, categorizations, and the biases that follow” (p. 158).

The central message of the Church (see Footnote 5, page 13) is the Gospel. The dominant composition of local United Methodist congregations is segregated. *As antithetical as racism is to the Gospel, local United Methodist congregations perpetuate racism and racism plagues and cripples local congregations throughout The United Methodist Church.*

From before its formation and since, racial and ethnic injustice has been a part of the social order in the United States. Racism has manifested and continues to manifest in many forms. Racial oppression, marginalization, disregard, and segregation pervade many facets of American society, including the institutional church. While not through laws and regulations like the system of mass incarceration, the American institutional church perpetuates a racial caste system. The United Methodist Church publishes its motto “Open hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.” on its webpages. On one of these same webpages (see Appendix B), The United Methodist Church provides a local church search tool that includes a filter for ethnicity (The United Methodist Church, n.d., para. 2). The categories within this search tool are “Caucasian/White,” “Asian,” “African/Black,” “Hispanic,” “Native American,” and “Pacific Islander.” The intentions are likely to provide a tool for those who are searching for a local church to help find a setting where they may “fit in.” The intended message is not likely that those whose ethnicity is filtered out will not be welcome in local churches that do not share their ethnicity. However, it conveys a message that there are local churches where “Caucasian/White” United Methodists share space and resources which are distinct from where “African/Black” United Methodists share their own space and resources. Likewise, “Asian,” “Hispanic,” “Native American,” and “Pacific Islander” United Methodists each have their own local churches where each ethnic group shares space and resources among their constituents, which are distinct from “Caucasian/White” United Methodists

and from other ethnic groups. Also, it is curious that there is no filter for multi-ethnic or multi-cultural churches. *This United Methodist search tool signifies that segregation continues in the local churches and not enough local churches share space across racial, ethnic, or cultural lines to warrant a multi-ethnic or multi-cultural search category.* Unfortunately, this search tool is a microcosm of the present racial climate in The United Methodist Church and in the American institutional church.

From a broader culture perspective, Williams (2011) observes that the sports industry, political entities, the music industry, and corporate America have implemented strategies to make their constituencies more diverse. Though likely more driven by economics and/or politics than justice, Williams (2011) grieves “corporate America cares more about diversity than the Church does” (p. 98) and declares “the world is evolving in a good way as it relates to the issues of diversity outside the four walls of the Church; however, the Church is at a red light” (p. 35). With a mission that includes social transformation, the Church has the ministry of comprehensive reconciliation that reaches beyond capitalistic concerns. If The United Methodist Church has concern about growth in Christ and about transmitting the message of the gospel, then United Methodists’ concern for diversity should at least increase to the level of care that corporate America has about diversity.

Emerson and Smith (2000) propose that the Church has an important contribution to the solution to Black/White division in the U.S. through “their

stress on the importance of primary relationships, and the need for confession and forgiveness” (p. 170). Yet, the institutional church in America and The United Methodist Church have not collectively offered their contribution to the solution. In local United Methodist congregations, Sunday after Sunday and day after day, Whites gather in their worship and ministry spaces and Blacks gather in their worship and ministry spaces, moving no closer to the one shepherd/one flock vision of Jesus. Williams (2011) shares:

Church diversity on the surface may not initially seem like a felt need for everyone . . . we should understand that ‘reaching all people for Christ’ must be a felt need for the Church, and it can be a beautiful reality. Church diversity is about challenging ourselves to move beyond ‘what is’ to ‘what will be.’ (p. 20)

If the institutional church and/or The United Methodist Church is going to live out its identity as “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27) and “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18), it must offer a response that leads to more substantive racial reconciliation within the Church and contribute to more substantive racial harmony throughout U.S. society.

III.B.1. Recovering a movement ethos. The early Church emerged from the religious and political establishments of its day as a movement. One of the challenges of the institutional church is its perceived success in relation to an increase in number of people becoming part of the institutional church and to an accumulation of resources. **Rev. Douglas** lamented, “We have a lot of churches

of all ethnicities that have been here forever. And as long as we are tied to these physical structures, it's going to be hard to move, either of us" (personal interview, 2013, July 25). The institutional church's tendency has been to establish rules, commission experts, and develop agencies to manage the institution that emerged from the movement. The institution became counter-intuitive to the movement. The institution and all it has to offer became something to revere and protect. However, oftentimes, constituents yearn for *the energy, the fluidity, the impact, and the perpetual newness of the movement*.

Wesley did not intend to establish a denomination. Haynes (2010) declares, "In Wesley's lifetime, he never acknowledged Methodism as a church; to him it was a movement of renewal within the Church of England" (p. 86). Wesley's theology and practice emerged as a movement within the Anglican Church in response to the marginalized populations that the Anglican Church neglected. Rendle (2011) explains:

Where once John Wesley was, himself, the original and sole extension minister appointed beyond the local church in order to serve the [Anglican] denomination, his efforts were eventually and necessarily replaced and multiplied by the development of other boards, agencies, and specialists. (p. 14)

However, Wesley personally engaged in public discussion and contributed to the heightening of public consciousness (Marquadt, 1992).

Wesley, his associates, and his followers—the people called Methodists—in England and in the New World were engaged in discourse and

action related to economics, slavery, suffrage, civil rights, women's rights, and other issues that impacted the members of society. As a movement, Methodism extended its *energy, fluidity, impact, and newness* towards social transformation. Unfortunately, later Wesleyan followers reflect these qualities in rhetoric, but not in practice. United Methodism has stalled as a movement in deference for preservation of the institution.

Significant cultural shifts have occurred that impact The United Methodist Church, to which The United Methodist Church has not responded adequately enough to be a considerable movement. The United Methodist strand of Wesleyan theology, along with other strands, have become essentially inert in spite of being founded as a movement and a history of being involved in movements (e.g., abolition, suffrage, and civil rights). Methodism in the U.S. has historically functioned primarily as Black churches and White churches. United Methodism has a disappointing record in regards to its tradition of and vision for engagement in social transformation, particularly concerning racial *irreconciliation*.

Wesleyan theology has not been effective in maintaining the character of United Methodism as a movement and has not responded effectively to cultural shifts. United Methodist concern about "transforming the world" (Alexander, 2012, p. 91) has not translated to effectiveness in social transformation. United

Methodists have abandoned methodology(ies)⁶ that have been effective in the past and have potential for effectiveness in contemporary settings. United Methodists have an enormous mission and some resources to project them towards the mission. They have rich heritage that supports the mission. The disconnection is not with content, desire, heritage, or resources. United Methodist structure presents significant obstacles against the mission. Haynes (2010) asserts, “The sad mistake of the 20th century was to develop a sophisticated ‘church-ianity’ that was not synonymous with ‘Christ-ianity.’ We developed ‘churchmanship’ (male and female) rather than discipleship” (p. 86). According to its Social Creed, United Methodists have a vision of social peace, natural preservation, equitable distribution of provisions, just working conditions, and an appreciation for diversity (Alexander, 2012). Arguably, none of the elements of the United Methodist vision are operational to a level that it contributes significantly to social transformation. Arguably, social conditions are

⁶ As do many other faith traditions, United Methodists recognize a variety of methods that contribute to teaching and learning the faith. The *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) identifies some of the methods that United Methodists use to perform the mission, “We make disciples as we . . . nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing” (p. 88). John Wesley (1746) defined means of grace as “outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God . . . to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men [*sic*.] preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (as cited in Outler & Heitzenrater, 1991, p. 160). In his list of means of grace, Haynes (2010) includes prayer, searching the Scriptures, fasting, public worship, and holy conversation (p. 79). Maddox (1994) adds to the list the liturgical calendar, hymns, sermons, love feasts, watch-night services, covenant renewal, the general rules, spiritual directors, accountability groups, works of mercy, and self denial (pp. 205–216). The acceptable means of faith instruction within United Methodist churches are designed to sustain the increase in number of and movement of disciples for social/world transformation.

digressing away from the vision of The United Methodist Church. Arguably, the vision is not being achieved even within The United Methodist Church.

Like its Anglican predecessor, Methodism in America has enjoyed the success of increased number of adherents and amassed resources, which has led to reverence and a perceived need for protection by some of its adherents.

Mrs. Matthews illustrated how this looks in a contemporary setting, “I think [tradition is] one of the obstacles we faced is, is people from all, all the areas say that I’m just comfortable” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Weems (2012) describes the development of Methodism in the United States as fervor and marginality in the Eighteenth century, growth and establishment in the Nineteenth century, and maturity and decline in the Twentieth Century. *In the Twenty-First century, United Methodism exists as what could be described as an inert institution, or a dead sect, that is ineffective in social transformation.* Rendle (2011) observes, “The United Methodist Church and its congregations are still long-established, large, bureaucratic institutions that live close to the traditional practices of earlier generations and lumber slowly to make critical decisions” (p. 10). Goodpaster (2008) adds:

For those of us in the Wesleyan tradition, we have lost any resemblance to the movement . . . In America, we have managed to become what John Wesley feared: we have the form, we have the organizational structure, and we have the vocabulary, but we lack the power or the courage or the will to radically alter the downward spiral of membership and participation that will move us beyond surviving for a few more decades as a shell of our former selves. (p. 5)

Wesley, Weems, Rendle, Goodpaster, and many of his other successors, would prefer for the denomination to discontinue than to continue as a dead sect.

An institution reveals its primary concerns by what it measures. Rendle (2011) suggests that some constituents of The United Methodist Church have assumed a consumerist posture, directing the institution to meet the needs of the congregations, clergy, and/or members, with each of these sub-groups competing for their interests to be primary, resulting in a measurement of clergy and/or congregational satisfaction. United Methodists have outsourced their theological task to consumer-oriented clergy (Rendle, 2011). Also, many United Methodists non-conscientiously (see Footnote 4, page 12) navigate through the American white racial frame, which contradicts the United Methodist faith tradition to which they subscribe. Rendle (2011) further suggests that the measure of institutional effectiveness should shift from money, members, satisfied clergy, and satisfied congregations to transformed people who will transform the world. Effectiveness of a movement is not reflected by increases in membership and/or money, but by more substantive transformation of lives and communities.

What should United Methodists do to recover the movement ethos? Williams (2011) argues, “The motive is to truly honor God by developing a movement of people who are willing to do whatever it takes to have [God’s] will done on earth as it is in heaven” (p. 20). The Church has a responsibility to intervene against unjust social structures, not for the sake of institutional

survivability, but for the sake of the fidelity of the Church, in particular, and in the interest of a more just society, in general. Adherents to Wesleyan theology have a rich history and tradition of commitment to social justice and social transformation. Members of the Church are called to be agents of restoration, liberation, and reconciliation and to invite others to become a part of this movement. The operation of the Church had and has the potential to produce personal and social transformation.

An option other than The United Methodist Church discontinuing or continuing as a dead sect is to regenerate the movement. Those who are interested in regenerating movement in The United Methodist Church should ask of those who revere and/or protect the institution, “Have institutional needs of The United Methodist Church superseded the needs of The United Methodist Church to live out its mission?” Lovett Weems’s *Focus* and *Take the Next Step* and Gil Rendle’s *Back to Zero* are highly regarded by United Methodists as books that accurately and comprehensively characterize the present condition of The United Methodist Church. They also offer recommendations that may redirect the course of United Methodism towards greater vitality and capacity to live out its mission. The recommendations that Weems and Rendle make are primarily structural—e.g., changing what it measures (Rendle, 2011), reviewing roles, sizes, costs of conferences and agencies, and reviewing the appointment process (Weems, 2012). Structural changes are necessary and many of those that Weems and Rendle recommend will likely improve conditions for and

effectiveness of The United Methodist Church. However, changes in United Methodists' ways of doing, ways of being, ways of teaching, and ways of learning should also be considered. Engaging in social transformation through racial reconciliation will signify vitality and provide a means to regenerate United Methodist movement.

III.B.2. Curriculum of reconciliation. The vast majority of the advocacy for reconciliation in The United Methodist Church occurs at denominational or regional levels. However, as Peck (2012) points out, the real work happens at the local church level (para. 2). Certainly, Whites and Blacks can occasionally share space and resources in meetings and gatherings. True consciousness raising and heart changing for Methodists has to occur at the local church level to reflect the hope of some Methodist forerunners.

While transformation is unlikely to occur from the top-down, those who direct the resources should prioritize providing curriculum, resources, and opportunities designed to raise the consciousness of those in the local churches. Emerson and Smith (2000) reason, “educated, sacrificial, realistic efforts made in faith across racial lines can help us together move toward a more just, equitable, and peaceful society” (p. 172). This may be through conferences, articles, newsletters, magazines, lectures, weblogs, teleconferences, and/or other media.

United Methodist curriculum developers should acknowledge the efforts and expertise of those who are presently engaged in ministry of race reconciliation and organize and deploy them as subject matter experts to help

develop curriculum for social transformation. *The curriculum should provide opportunities for sharing stories, confession, repentance, and forgiveness. The curriculum should recognize difference as a source of beauty.* Teachings should reject tolerance and assimilation as options and promote pluralism, which Eck (2002) describes as a “symphony of difference” (p. 56). Eck (2002) advises, “It is critical to hear and value the many new ways in which the variety of American people bring life and vibrancy to the whole of our society” (p. 77). The curriculum should also alert participants of the probability of discomfort. DeYmaz (2007) describes, “A healthy multi-ethnic church is a place in which people are comfortable being uncomfortable” (p. 110). *The curriculum should promote mutual sacrifice*, so that as congregations begin to share resources, neither constituency will sacrifice so much as to discourage them from participating in the process. *Holistic ministry should be promoted in the curriculum*, so that the lesser represented population is included in planning, decision-making, finance, preaching, teaching, and all other aspects of the life of the church.

United Methodists embrace an expectation that the reign of God will be perfected and embrace an ideal of Christian perfection. Christian perfection has been well-defined in Wesleyan theology. However, the pursuit of Christian perfection has not been applied effectively enough to prevent consumerism or institutional inertia. Wesley characterized Christian perfection as “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor” and “having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked” (Alexander, 2012, p. 51). However, Goodpaster (2008) explains, “A

leader in and for the church never stops learning, growing, and going on to perfection” (p. 45). Holmes (2010) adds:

Even though we have come a mighty long way, we still have a mighty long way to go. Thus we can never afford the luxury of being satisfied with ourselves as we are. We must ever have a noble sense of discontent with things as they are in our Church and in society. (n.p.)

Black church interpretive traditions appear to concur regarding the need for continual movement. Roberts (2005) further elaborates, “[The human condition is one in which there are imperfect strivings: therefore, being forgiven and forgiving others is a constant duty” (p. 62). While Christian perfection is an admiral goal, arriving at the goal, as implausible as it may seem, does not end the pursuit. Methodists are in continual pursuit of a better reality.

I believe that race relations within United Methodism are redeemable.

Black church interpretive traditions can offer theory and language to remind United Methodist of their heritage concerning race relations and provoke United Methodists towards greater effectiveness in their “world transformation” mission through providing the U.S. society and U.S. church an operational model of racial reconciliation. Wesley and his followers have a relatively consistent early heritage of social activism and advocacy for just racial relations. Marquadt (1992) proclaims, “In evangelistic and pastoral praxis Wesley did not distinguish between white and black, free and slaves” (p. 71). Critically conscious United Methodists can actively engage in transforming culture towards more social, political, and economic responsibility. As the sheep of the same flock with open

doors, open hearts and open minds, the people of The United Methodist Church should be compelled to share space, time, language, financial resources, personnel, stories, traditions, authority, interpretive frameworks, and experiences.

III.C. United Methodist Theory and Practice

The educational program of The United Methodist Church has great potential for contributing to the transformation of the culture of the denomination. The United Methodist Church, in general, has high regard for education. As a faith tradition, The United Methodist Church has founded over 1,200 schools, colleges, and universities, of which 123 remain (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2004, p. 5). The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is one of only nine program-related general agencies of The United Methodist Church (Alexander, 2012). The United Methodist Church has a scholarship and loan program to help United Methodist students finance their higher education journey (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2004). Along with other gifts and graces that the denomination evaluates, The United Methodist Church expects its ministers to be prepared academically through higher education.

Theological schools play a significant role in the operation of The United Methodist Church through their connections with local pastors. The United Methodist Church has a detailed program for educating persons in preparation for ministry within the United Methodist Church and for evaluating theological

schools that will carry out this task. Every local pastor in The United Methodist Church is either enrolled in or graduated from college, seminary, or the United Methodist Course of Study (Alexander, 2012).

United Methodists' high regard of and support for education is commendable. However, the commitment to education has not translated to consistent effectiveness by The United Methodist Church towards its mission. The mission of The United Methodist Church is "to *make disciples* of Jesus Christ for the *transformation of the world*" [italics mine] (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). Weems (2012) reports that as of 2009, worship attendance has declined 78% since 1968, membership has declined 71% since 1968, and the number of children and youth has declined 44% since 1974. Further, Weems (2012) further reports that in 1970, the United Methodist population shifted from being younger than the general population to being older than the general population. The United Methodist Church has not been effective at making disciples considering the declines in membership, worship attendance, and youth participation.

Neither has The United Methodist Church been effective at world transformation, considering the loss of influence, lack of "movement," and cultural shifts that the denomination did not initiate and to which the denomination has not responded adequately. To the discipleship-making challenges that The United Methodist Church faces, Goodpaster (2008) adds loss of influence and inadequate responses to the cultural shifts of the postmodern age. Rendle (2011) identifies rules-oriented organizational bureaucracy as a hindrance to the

Methodist “movement” (p. 14). Certainly, The United Methodist Church should consider responses from leadership, structural, theological, cultural, and other perspectives. However, the educational program also calls for critique, given its potential impact on the practice of ministry in The United Methodist Church.

The published commitment statements (e.g., mission statements, vision statements, or other statements of priorities) of the seminaries and theological schools approved by The United Methodist Church and of the Annual Conferences (see Footnote 2, page 4 or Appendix 1 for a description of “annual conference”) of The United Methodist Church reveal contrasts between priorities of theorists and priorities of practitioners of the denomination. As other institutions in the U.S., The United Methodist Church considers clarity of mission to be vital for effectiveness. The *Book of Discipline* declares, “Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 92). The University Senate’s (see Footnote 3, page 5) review process includes an evaluation of the institutions’ mission statements. The University Senate (2007) instructs, “The mission statement of the institution shall define and articulate its church relatedness. This statement should be operational in the life of the college” (p. 37). The mission statements or other statements of commitments are the proclamations that the institutions have defined for themselves about

themselves. Those who read these statements should be able to develop a general understanding about the institutions from the statements.

Given denominational and cultural perceptions of mission and vision statements, these published statements represent the priorities of these institutions. Representatives of each institution attempted to capture the institution's reason for existence in a few sentences or a few paragraphs. An analysis of these statements reveals *collective patterns of priorities* (Casey, 1993, p. 19) and *collective patterns of inclusion, omission, and disparity* (Casey, 1993, p. 234) for the seminaries and theological schools and for the annual conferences. The statements of commitments reveal differences between the collective priorities of the seminaries and theological schools and of the annual conferences.

III.C.1. Priorities of United Methodists practitioners. Annual conferences are “the fundamental bodies” (Alexander, 2012, p. 26) of The United Methodist Church. An annual conference in The United Methodist Church is “a regional body, an organizational unit, and a yearly meeting” (United Methodist Communications, 2011b, “Annual Conferences,” para. 1). The *Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church identifies:

The purpose of the annual conference is *to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world* by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God. [Emphasis mine, representing the denominational mission statement] (Alexander, 2012, p. 394)

The general mission statement of annual conferences in The United Methodist Church includes the denominational mission statement and the method through which annual conferences support the mission (e.g., equipping local churches for ministry and providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church). Annual conferences represent the first level of collective churches governing for, planning for, and practicing carrying out the mission of The United Methodist Church. For this dissertation, the annual conference commitment statements represent the perspectives of practitioners of The United Methodist Church.

A dominant theme of the annual conferences' commitment statements is affirmation of the mission statement of The United Methodist Church, reflected by elements of the denominational mission statement appearing in many of the commitment statements of the annual conferences. Disciple-making is central to the mission of The United Methodist Church. Goodpaster (2008) describes disciple-making as "the work of God's grace active in a person's heart and life, and the continuing work of grace as a person responds to Christ" (p. 98) and the persons of the church cooperating through inviting, encouraging, inspiring, sharing, summoning, and proclaiming, through which God makes disciples. Of the 45 annual conferences who published mission statements on their website, 32 mention making disciples, creating disciples, sending forth disciples, becoming disciples, growing disciples, and reaching seekers of faith (see Appendix G). Making disciples is a high priority for the annual conferences as practitioners of the denomination.

Transformation is also a recurring theme, referenced in the statements of twenty-four of the annual conferences. The annual conferences of The United Methodist Church expect their disciple-making actions to have an impact on their communities. “The world” is the arena in which the annual conferences expect the transformation to occur, as indicated by the statements of twenty-three annual conferences. The “world” which the annual conferences expect to impact is not necessarily the entire planet, but the arena outside of the Church. Three of the annual conferences specifically express a global concern. The “world”-related statements are more of a distinction between the sacred (Church) and the secular (world). For example, the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church (n.d.) intends to “Develop effective servant leaders for the church and the world” (para. 6) and the Louisiana Conference of The United Methodist Church (n.d.) proclaims, “We do not withdraw from the world, but rather we participate as leaven in the world to infuse the love of God through Christ as the ideal relationship between God and individuals and between one another” (para. 4). The annual conferences expect for that which happens within the local churches to influence the culture outside of the churches.

The statements of the annual conferences generally do not mention the aspects of culture that they intend for their disciple-making practices to transform. Granted, 45% of the statements are affirmations of the denominational mission statement with little or no commentary. The average length of the statements of commitments of annual conferences is 37.64 words, with twelve of the annual

conferences having statements with fewer words than the denomination's concise eighteen word statement. The annual conferences that depart from this pattern focus on nurturing and equipping local churches, developing leadership, and developing strategies for carrying out the mission. For example, the mission statement of the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church (2006) is "To identify, equip, and empower spiritual leaders for local churches" (para. 1) and the mission statement of the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (2011) is, "Starting new United Methodist faith communities and helping existing congregations reach out to their mission fields and are the two primary ways that the conference helps churches to reach new people" (para. 3). The annual conferences do not generally express the specific social concerns of the world that they intend to affect.

The United Methodist Church expresses concern about issues of poverty.

The concise mission statement of The United Methodist Church is 18 words:

"The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). The United Methodist Church expands its declaration about its mission in the 983-word "Mission and Ministry of the Church" section in *The Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012.

Included in the expanded mission statement is the commitment to:

Send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel. (Alexander, 2012, p. 92)

Beyond the expanded mission statement, *The Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) acknowledges:

In spite of general affluence in the industrialized nations, the majority of persons in the world live in poverty . . . As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich . . . we emphasize measures that build and maintain the wealth of poor people. (Alexander, 2012, pp. 130–131)

The “Companion Litany to Our Social Creed” of The United Methodist Church declares, “God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the market place. And so shall we” (Alexander, 2012, p. 142). In spite of the emphatic proclamations of The United Methodist Church regarding poverty, only the Red Bird Missionary Conference in Kentucky (2012) addresses poverty in its statement, declaring “Its goal is to minister to the whole person by addressing spiritual, physical, educational and economic needs” (para. 1). Other annual conferences may have poverty as a priority and may have strategies and ministries designed to address poverty, but poverty is not generally mentioned in the mission statements.

Racial justice is another expressed concern of The United Methodist Church and another opportunity for the denomination to engage in social transformation. The “Mission and Ministry of the Church” section declares:

As servants of Christ we are sent into the world to engage in the struggle for justice and reconciliation. We seek to reveal the love of God for men, women, and children of all ethnic, racial, cultural, and national

backgrounds and to demonstrate the healing power of the gospel with those who suffer. (Alexander, 2012, p. 93)

Again, beyond the expanded mission statement, the *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) declares, “Racism plagues and cripples our growth in Christ, inasmuch it is antithetical to the gospel itself” (p. 117). Further, the *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) directs annual conferences to oppose discrimination, instructing:

The annual conference, for its own government, may adopt rules and regulations not in conflict with the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church, provided that in exercise of its powers, each annual conference shall act in all respects in harmony with the policy of The United Methodist Church with respect to elimination of discrimination. (pp. 399–400)

The annual conferences of The United Methodist Church express less of a concern for racial justice than the general church. The annual conferences that make allusions to race refer to diversity rather than racial justice. Diversity, or sharing space, does necessarily translate to equity between race representatives. Thirteen of the annual conferences express their commitment to diversity and/or ministry with *all* people in their statements, such as the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Annual Conference (2012), who commits, “To affirm our cultures and witness to God’s grace through our native languages, hymns, and traditions” (para. 1). Only the Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church (2013) of Tennessee specifically mentions justice, envisioning, “risk-taking love for all God’s children until Holston Conference reflects the saving

grace and *redeeming justice* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (para. 1). The direct expression of The United Methodist Church about racial justice has not translated to a consistent inclusion about advocacy for racial justice in the annual conferences’ statements. As it is with the issue of poverty, other annual conferences may have diversity as a priority and may have strategies and ministries designed to address diversity, but diversity is not mentioned in the commitment statements.

The composite commitment statements of the practitioners of The United Methodist Church, the annual conferences, convey a consistent message of commitment to the mission of The United Methodist Church, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). Few of the annual conferences commit to addressing any particular issues that will lead to social transformation. Considering their brevity, to expect any statement to detail all of the priorities of the annual conference would be unreasonable. Nevertheless, the denomination’s acknowledgement of the socially destructive natures of poverty and racism and the pledge to social transformation yields only sparse mention of poverty and racial justice in the commitment statements.

III.C.2. Priorities of United Methodist theorists. The mission and vision statements of the thirteen theological schools that have historic relationships with the denomination and the thirty-eight theological schools approved by the University Senate (see Footnote 3, page 5) of The United Methodist Church to be listed as affiliates from 2009 through 2012 reveal the priorities of theorists of The

United Methodist Church. The statements of the theological schools are much longer than the statements of the annual conferences. The average number of words in the theological schools' statements is 177.49, with only one theological school, Lancaster Theological Seminary, with an equal number of words with the denomination's concise statement. All other statements exceed the number of words of the denomination's concise statement and none of the statements exceed the number of words in the denomination's expanded mission statement. Nevertheless, as with the commitment statements of the annual conferences, to expect a brief statement of any of the theological schools to list all of the priorities of the seminary or theological school would be unreasonable. However, these statements provide insight to what these schools consider their priorities to be and what is of enough significance to be included in these statements.

The United Methodist Church has clearly declared its expectations for its theological schools. The *Book of Discipline* (2012) charges:

United Methodist schools of theology share a common mission of preparing persons for leadership in ministry of The United Methodist Church; of leading in the ongoing reflection on Wesleyan theology; and of assisting the church in fulfilling its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. (Alexander, 2012, p. 658)

The United Methodist directive for *theological schools prioritizes leadership preparation, engagement in Wesleyan theological theory, and involvement in and carrying out the mission of the church.*

Concerning the instruction from The United Methodist Church about *leadership preparation*, the commitment statements of the theological schools reflect general compliance. All thirteen United Methodist theological schools publish a commitment to cultivating, educating, preparing, empowering, forming, or invigorating leaders in their statements. Twenty-three of the 38 non-United Methodist theological schools also express leadership development as a priority (see Appendix I). Assuming these statements are operational, United Methodist theological schools and affiliate theological schools are focused, in general, on preparing leaders of and for the church.

United Methodist theological schools are responsive to the directive to lead in the ongoing *reflection on Wesleyan Theology*. Ten of the 13 United Methodist theological schools refer to “tradition,” while five of these schools specifically mention Wesleyan or United Methodist tradition. The statements of ten of the 38 affiliate schools include “tradition,” though none of the affiliate theological schools refer to Wesleyan or United Methodist tradition. In fact, some of the schools refer to other faith traditions, including Reformed, Presbyterian-Reformed, Moravian, and Anglican.

The Saint Paul School of Theology (n.d.) is the only United Methodist theological school which includes both aspects of The United Methodist mission statement, asserting, “Saint Paul School of Theology educates leaders *to make disciples for Jesus Christ*, renew the church, and *transform the world*” [italics mine] (para. 2). The mission statement of the Christian Theological Seminary, an

affiliate theological school, also shares both aspects of the mission statement of The United Methodist Church. Christian Theological Seminary (2012) states, “The mission of Christian Theological Seminary is to *form disciples of Jesus Christ* for church and community leadership to serve God’s *transforming of the world*” [italics mine] (para. 1). Sewanee: The University of the South School of Theology (n.d.), an affiliate theological school, mentions only “forming disciples” (para. 1). Otherwise, none of the other schools discuss making or forming disciples.

Social transformation is more thematic for United Methodist theological schools than for annual conferences, being mentioned in ten of the thirteen mission statements. Nine of the thirty-eight affiliate schools mention *social transformation* in their statements. While the theological schools do not consistently mention assisting The United Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission, certainly, through preparing leaders and through providing leadership for reflection in Wesleyan and Christian theology, the theological schools support the mission of The United Methodist Church.

The theological schools were not collectively consistent in their commitment statements about the issues that they plan to address, which they expect to lead to social transformation. None of the schools’ commitment statements mention poverty or ministry with those who are impoverished. *Justice was more thematic with the theological schools than with the annual conferences*, with fourteen of the theological schools, 27.5%, expressing

commitment to justice. However, only the Pacific School of Religion (2004) specifically emphasized racial/ethnic justice. Thirty-one percent of the schools addressed diversity in their statements: Nine of the United Methodist theological schools and seven of the affiliate schools. For example, the affiliate Harvard Divinity School (2012) intends, “To help in building a world in which people can live and work together across religious and cultural divides” (para. 6) and the affiliate Princeton Theological Seminary (n.d.) affirms, “In response to Christ’s call for the unity of the church, the Seminary embraces in its life and work a rich racial and ethnic diversity and the breadth of communions represented in the worldwide church” (para. 3).

The theological schools’ composite *commitment to diversity* is not as militant as the University Senate’s commitment to justice and equality. The University Senate (2007) assesses the racial and gender profile of the faculty and the student body for a theological school to determine if an affiliate is acceptable. The University Senate (2007) declares:

The United Methodist Church is committed to affirmative actions and initiatives promoting justice and equality among all people regardless of race, gender, or national origin. It is committed to an ecumenical and inclusive community of faith which seeks and welcomes without reservation persons of every race, both male and female. This inclusiveness should be reflected in its faculty, administration and student body. [italics mine] (pp. 34–35)

Perhaps the denominational and/or University Senate statements inform the theological schools’ consciousness. Or, perhaps theological schools sensed the

need for a theological response to injustice and homogeneity in the church and broader culture. Whatever the inspiration is, though not as militant as the University Senate or the denomination, the theological schools have regard for justice and diversity.

The composite theorists, the theological schools, of The United Methodist Church share a goal of preparing leaders for the Church and the world. A majority of the statements of the United Methodist theological schools reflect a commitment to providing leadership for continued reflection in Wesleyan theology and Christian theology, as do a number of affiliate schools. The schools do not overwhelmingly collectively commit to making disciples. The theological schools are largely committed to social transformation, with nearly half of the theological schools regarding justice and diversity as enough of a priority to include in their commitment statements.

III.C.3. Observations and inferences. The priorities interpreted through composite published statements of the practitioners (annual conferences) and the theorists (theological schools) of The United Methodist Church reveal some correspondence and some contradictions. *The dominant theme of the statements of the theological schools is leadership preparation. The dominant theme of the statements of the annual conferences is a commitment to the denomination's stated mission, "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world"* (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). While the theological schools do not consistently reference making disciples in their statements, 37%

reflect a commitment to social transformation. The statements of the theological schools demonstrate a commitment to diversity and/or justice, while the statements of the annual conferences do not. Neither the annual conferences' nor theological schools' statements about *diversity or justice* reflect the militant contempt expressed by the denomination. The annual conferences' statements are generally briefer than the statements of the theological schools, which may account for the lack of detail about the issues on which they will focus in their work towards social transformation. At least seven of the annual conferences and sixteen of the theological schools include details in their statements about at least one social issue. Issues of *racism and poverty* are so egregious and pervasive that it is very troubling that they do not have more significant mention in the statements of the theological schools or annual conferences of The United Methodist Church.

The University Senate (2007) instructs the theological schools to maintain continuing conversations with the bishops, annual conferences, and the agencies of The United Methodist Church in their geographic areas. These conversations should facilitate connections between theorists and practitioners, though the schools are not instructed to include congregants of local churches in the conversation. Further, fifteen of the seventeen members of the University Senate who are non-ex-officio are connected to a theological school as faculty members or administrators. In summary, a distinction between the priorities of

the theorists and practitioners of The United Methodist Church is reflected in their statements of commitments.

One of the recurring facetious phrases used within local churches is the rhetorical purposeful “slip of the tongue” reference to “seminaries” as “cemeteries” (e.g., “our pastor graduated from the XYZ Cemetery . . . I mean Seminary.”). This phrase suggests that the local church community perceives that a death has occurred for those who have been immersed in the seminary experience. Likewise, in the seminary, certain esoteric material is presented about which the seminary community says, “You cannot preach this in the local church,” suggesting that the congregants of the local church are not sophisticated enough to process the material. While the comments are typically made in jest, they reveal a *disconnection between the seminaries, or theorists, and the local church, or practitioners.*

Leaders who have, through theological schools, been equipped with theory related to concern for diversity are sent as leaders into local churches whose congregants do not share the same level of concern for racial justice or social transformation. Conflict occurs when the theological school-trained leader’s theoretical reflections are put into practice in a setting that has not been exposed to similar theological reflection. A more intentional integration of theory and practice must occur in order to increase effectiveness in the theological schools and in the annual conferences and local churches.

While The United Methodist Church formally condemns racism, segregation remains the dominant composition of the majority of United Methodist local churches. Some processes, structures, values, or practices that are not equitable to African Americans persist in The United Methodist Church, including the distribution of resources, selection of leadership, and appointment of clergy. Similar to students who resist against the American school system, African Americans participate in informal and non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) resistance through not participating in United Methodist ministries and events outside of their local congregations or through leaving The United Methodist Church altogether.

Some United Methodists have taken measures that facilitate possibility for more substantive racial reconciliation, which, as Cartwright (1999) describes, “is surely a sign of hope” (p. 127). Special interest groups work within The United Methodist Church to promote discourse about race. The Commission on Religion and Race is organized on the denominational and annual conference levels to teach, review, and monitor as an advocate group for behaviors, processes, and practices that promote a more inclusive church (Alexander, 2012). Also, Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) is a national organization with regional caucuses which has a purpose “*To act as an agitating conscience on all boards and agencies of The United Methodist Church in order to keep them sensitive to the needs and expressions of a ‘genuinely’ inclusive and relevant Church*” [italics mine] (Black Methodists for Church Renewal, 2010,

n.p.). The Northeastern Jurisdiction, one of the five geographic units in the U.S., established a Multi-Ethnic Center in 1978, which helps to “to break down barriers of racism and build up bridges of progressive, cooperative ministry among racial-ethnic groups in the jurisdiction and beyond” (Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry, 2012, para. 2). The General Board of Discipleship, at the denominational level, has a staff person dedicated to supporting founding new multi-ethnic churches (GBOD, 2012). Though only a small fraction of the approximately 34,000 United Methodist local congregations in the United States (United Methodist Communications, 2011a, “The Budget,” para. 3), only dozens of United Methodist local churches identify themselves as multi-ethnic or multi-cultural. In summary, while not of the majority culture in The United Methodist Church or U.S. society, some United Methodists are actively engaged in the movement to promote racial harmony.

Some annual conferences are engaged in some actions that promote racial harmony, including the Western North Carolina Conference. Jennifer Davis, the Conference’s director of Discipleship Ministries, indicated, “I think, on a whole, overall, that race relations are good and they’ve improved. But, it is a big but, I think they could be better. They can always be better” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). Certainly, the Conference has much more work to do, but the episcopal leader of the Western North Carolina Conference, Bishop Larry Goodpaster, provides leadership towards racial reconciliation. **Rev. Douglas**, an

interviewee and an African American pastor in the Western North Carolina

Conference, reflected:

You know, he is, has been actively trying to do something at [cross-racial appointments]. He paid for me to go to a class on that called "Meeting God at the Boundaries." It was all the way in California now. So, he has an interest in the church being "the church," being a "united" Methodist church. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

and:

I think this year, there might have been one or two instances where the Bishop did force the issue. And I applaud him for that. If we don't take bold steps and break some of these barriers on purpose, they're not going to be broken. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Davis outlined some of the steps the Conference is taking towards improving race relations. They include:

- Sessions with an outside facilitator with some of our Conference leadership, including our Bishop, our district superintendents, and people who are leaders of our different ministry groups;
- A conversation among African American pastors with a facilitator to discuss some issues related to race;
- A conversation between African Americans in the Conference and the Bishop for him to share his vision for the Conference about being vital congregations to transform communities and lives of other people;
- A conversation between African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/as, and Asian Americans in the Conference and the Bishop in small groups separated by ethnicity, sharing thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of the respective churches and what could be done to improve them;
- A self-formed support group of pastors who are leading cross-cultural or cross-racial congregations coming together and discussing items that they feel are important to them;

- Encouragement for and sending people to events to learn more about being in a multi-ethnic environment and about how to do a better job of appointing people in those positions;
- Some churches who have gathered to work together across racial lines, with at least one set of them merging;
- A number of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments; and
- District superintendents share stories of where they have seen God at work in their districts, in their missional networks, in their local churches at every Cabinet meeting. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

These are *hope-filled signs* that the work towards transforming racial relations is in progress in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The 2012 General Conference,⁷ the governing voice of The United Methodist Church, celebrated full communion between African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, African Union Methodist Protestant, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Union American Methodist Episcopal, and United Methodist denominations (Peck, 2012), which means that each denomination acknowledges the authenticity of the other denominations' baptism, Eucharist, and ministries and is committed to working together towards greater unity (Bloom, 2009). Celebrating full communion is movement towards reconciliation among racially segregated bodies who have similar faith and theological

⁷ General conference is the legislative governing body of The United Methodist Church. Delegates from annual conferences meet for eleven days every four years. Frank (2002) describes, "The General Conference brings together a thousand United Methodists from over twenty nations to set policy, approve legislation, and issue pronouncements on behalf of the entire connection" (p. 255). According to the Council of Bishops, "Each General Conference amends, perfects, clarifies, and adds its own contribution to the *Discipline*" (Alexander, 2012, pp. v–vi).

heritages. What shall be done with African Americans? Some Methodists are still engaged in a response to the question, which is “surely a sign of hope.”

Conclusion

Racism has played a substantive role in U.S. history and is manifested in many cross-sections of the nation, including the institutional church. *While the Church has an image, a mandate, and a moral responsibility that is antithetical to racism, the institutional church, in general, and The United Methodist Church, in particular, failed and fails to resist the stronghold of racism.* Methodists have a complex history regarding race relations. Some White Methodists taught African Americans literacy when it was unlawful to do so. White Methodists started schools and colleges for African Americans. White Methodists provided scholarships to African American students. On the other hand, some White Methodists refused to allow Black Methodists to pray at their altar. Others exiled Black Methodists because their presence made them uncomfortable. The result was two centuries of two distinct sets of local Methodist churches, Black and White, forming throughout the U.S. The United Methodist Church has made efforts, particularly at the denominational level and regional levels, towards racial reconciliation. While these efforts are admirable, they have not completely resolved the internal racial *irreconciliation*, particularly at the local church level.

The high regard that The United Methodist Church has for higher education and the role of higher education in fulfilling the mission of the church is supported by the colleges and university that the church founded, the

denominational scholarship and loan program for higher education, the educational requirements for ministers in The United Methodist Church, and the process that the denomination has established to ensure that United Methodist theological schools and affiliate theological schools reflect interests that are similar to The United Methodist Church. An evaluation of the denomination's educational program through statements of commitments of theological schools (theorists) and annual conferences (practitioners) reveal some shared interests, but also reveal some contradictions. The composite commitment statements of both the theological schools and the annual conferences reflect a commitment to social transformation. The statements of the theological schools express a commitment to diversity, while the annual conferences largely do not. This does not suggest that the annual conferences are not concerned about diversity, but it was not such a priority issue to be mentioned in their statements of commitments. Regardless, the commitment to diversity does not reflect the denomination's expressed concern for racial justice.

In spite of a dominant culture of un-critical non-consciousness (see Footnote 4, page 12) concerning race relations in The United Methodist Church, Black and White United Methodists can become critically conscious, raise the social consciousness of others, strategize, and intervene against racial social inertia. Holmes (2010) declares, "We can never afford the luxury of being satisfied with ourselves as we are. We must ever have a noble sense of discontent with things as they are in our Church and in society" (n.p.). *The*

United Methodist Church has the mandate, heritage, responsibility, and spiritual capacity to contribute to authentic racial reconciliation in the institutional church and in the U.S. society.

CHAPTER IV

WHY DO ANYTHING WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS?

*Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.
—John Fawcett 1782*

Introduction

Why should White and Black Christians desire reconciliation with one another? *Why should African Americans want to share space, time, stories, financial resources, personnel, authority, and/or experiences with White Americans who have historically and systematically oppressed and marginalized them?* Not everyone feels that racial reconciliation in the church is desirable, possible, and/or necessary. In *Chapter IV*, I present rationale for Black/White reconciliation in two parts. In Part I “Remembering Reconciliation within United Methodism,” I offer strategies for presenting reconciliation theologies to United Methodists and evaluate the potential for social transformation through race reconciliation in The United Methodist Church. Secondly, using Wesley’s Quadrilateral as a hermeneutical tool reflecting how majority Methodists do theology, in Part II “Responsible Theology from a Wesleyan Perspective Considering Black Interpretive Frameworks,” I evaluate the arguments against and for racial reconciliation for United Methodists.

Part I. Remembering Reconciliation within United Methodism

Jesus said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16 NKJV). Consistent with Jesus’s vision, the header on the webpages of The United Methodist Church reads, “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors. The People of The United Methodist Church” (United Methodist Communications, 2011a, 2011b). An analysis of the statements of commitments (e.g., mission statements, vision statements, and statements of emphases) of United Methodist annual conferences (regional governing units) and United Methodist theological schools reveals a general concern for social transformation, with 58% of the United Methodist institutions’ commitment statements making reference to social transformation. Considering the verbally accepted mandate; the egregious, persistent, and pervasive nature of racial division in the institutional church and in U.S. society; and the commitment to social transformation, intervening for a more racially just and humane Church (see Footnote 5, page 13) and society should be a priority for the institutional church, in general, and The United Methodist Church, in particular.

Blacks who connect with non-Black majority faith traditions, such as The United Methodist Church, may embrace the faith traditions’ denominational doctrines. Yet, they still live through the Black experience in America. Faith traditions who affirm reconciliation, or being *united*, within their theological framework would benefit from paying attention to Black theologians, scholars,

and congregants. Black *and* White persons in the Methodist tradition must be *untied* (see Footnote 1, page 1), or liberated, Methodists before being United Methodists. Blacks need to be liberated to greater autonomy and agency within the white racial frame. Whites need to be liberated from their whiteness (Rivers, 1997). Whites, too, are subject to the American white racial frame, either consciously or non-consciously (see Footnote 4, page 12).

About the white racial frame, Feagin (2010) explains that Whites are assumed to be “more moral, intelligent, rational, attractive, or hardworking than other racial groups, and especially than African Americans and other dark-skinned Americans” (p. 96). Certainly, within the white racial frame, White theology would be assumed to be more accurate and important than Black theology. Rivers suggests that White people cannot continue to perpetuate white superiority and Black inferiority and be Christian. Rivers (1997) insists, “We haven’t dealt with [the issue of our sin and slavery] because we in America have not made the decision whether we’re going to be white or Christian” (p. 18). Black theology and the Black experience is ignored or dismissed without significant consideration in an American white racial frame and in a “Christian” denominational white racial frame, whether consciously or non-consciously (see Footnote 4, page 12).

Black theology and the interpretations of Black experience are not contradictory to Wesleyan theology or practices. The congregation where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor acknowledges the iniquities between Black and White

persons in American culture. **Rev. Johnson** explained, “If you’re going to do [ministry with Black and White congregants together], you’re going to have to connect to the liberation of the African American church” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Bacote (1997) condemns the “retrenched attitudes and practices of those in power, those who have no desire to have their theology enhanced by those with less power” (p. 56) and argues, “We do well if we are mindful to seek ways in which our own local theologies can enrich the universal church” (p. 57). *Being open to Black theologies may be able to help project United Methodism towards a recovery of its heritage and more effectiveness towards its mission.*

United Methodists have particular doctrinal lenses through which they filter their theological task. According to the *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012), United Methodists consider that their theological task includes “testing, renewal, elaboration, and application” (p. 78). United Methodists describe their theological task as critical, constructive, individual, communal, contextual, incarnational, and essentially practical (Alexander, 2012). The *Book of Discipline* (2012) asserts, “Theology serves the Church by interpreting the world’s needs and challenges to the Church and by interpreting the gospel to the world” (Alexander, 2012, pp. 78–79). United Methodists affirm and share the “common Christian treasury” with other Christian communions, which includes understanding of the Holy Trinity, faith in salvation, present and future reality of the reign of God, and the authority of Scripture (Alexander, 2012, pp. 47–48). Along with these, United Methodists

have *particular distinctive emphases that instruct their pedagogy and through which they filter their theology.*

United Methodists articulate a distinct method through which they govern their behavior. One of the United Methodist theological emphases is adherence to a set of three general rules: *Do no harm, do good, and attend upon all the ordinances of God* (Alexander, 2012). As United Methodists do theology, they process their thoughts and actions through the general rules, in theory.

However, United Methodists contradict the general rules in practice. Cartwright (1999) proposes:

Where once upon a time Methodists received everyone ‘fleeing from the wrath to come’ and enjoined them to keep the ‘General Rules’ or be turned out, *it would appear the contemporary United Methodists have lost the sense of what it means to be the kind of holy people in whom reconciliation is embodied in disciplined forms of discipleship.* [italics mine] (p. 104)

Cartwright’s proposal recognizes that *irreconciliation* in The United Methodist Church is inconsistent with the General Rules. Exiling groups based on race is inconsistent with “doing good.” Subscribing to the American white racial frame conflicts with “doing no harm.” If Jesus ordains one flock with one shepherd, Black United Methodist churches and White United Methodists churches contradicts attending “upon the ordinances of God” (Alexander, 2012, p. 74).

United Methodists also articulate a distinct method through which they desire to impact culture. About the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, The *Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) narrates, “The United

Methodist Church has a long history of *concern for social justice*” [italics mine] (p. 103). The Social Principles include discussion about environmental concerns, commitment to those who are impoverished, political responsibility, and economic responsibility (Alexander, 2012). A great number of United Methodists have never read these Social Principles or rarely refer to them and have pledged blind obedience to this vast socio-theological lens. John Wesley (1786/1999) the credited founder of Methodism, proclaimed, “I AM not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should *only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power*” [italics mine] (para. 1). *An entity that is not impacted by its surroundings and has no impact on its surroundings is effectively dead.* Many would consider mainline denominational churches to be in crisis or dying based on decades of decline in church membership, reductions in financial support, and aging congregations. While these call for significant reflection and action, because of The United Methodist Church’s lack of engagement in social transformation and The United Methodist Church’s continued embodied whiteness (Powe, 2009), The United Methodist Church is in danger of existing as what Wesley feared, a dead sect.

A profound understanding of *grace* is another theological emphasis of United Methodists. *The Book of Discipline* (2012) defines *grace* as, “the *undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit*” [emphasis mine] (Alexander, 2012, p. 49). Black

Methodists and White Methodists need *grace* to respond to existential predicaments. Black Methodists and White Methodists will be unable to reconcile apart from God's intervening *grace*. Through *grace*, according to *The Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012), God transforms hearts to be habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor and transforms minds to be Christlike. United Methodists acknowledge that the call to and the power for transformation is God's prerogative. Haynes (2010) proclaims, "For Wesley, salvation as a process begins with God's *gracious*, seeking love" [emphasis mine] (p. 34). United Methodists acknowledge that transformation is not solely a human enterprise, but a human response to a *gracious* God. In theory, that eliminates senses of superiority and inferiority. However, in practice, United Methodist churches generally elevate protecting the institution above yielding to God's *gracious* and seeking love, remain segregated along race and class lines, and perpetuate other injustices. The hope for those who are deemed inferior according to the dominant American white racial frame is for God's *gracious* and seeking love to transform the culture towards a more just distribution of agency and autonomy, where those, other than the dominant culture, are more represented among leaders and decision makers, where they are not expected to represent their entire racial community, where resources are more equally distributed, and where they are not perceived as angry if they disagree.

Part II. Responsible Theology for Reconciliation from a Wesleyan

Perspective

Wesley's Quadrilateral describes John Wesley's practice of doing theology and a responsible process for practicing ministry. In his discussion of John Wesley's practice of doing theology in *Evangelism & Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, Albert C. Outler (2003) observes:

Wesley read *Scripture* through the eyes of *tradition*; he tested its insights in the crucible of personal *experience* and he sought to understand them within the scriptures of *reason*. Of all affirmations—his own and others—he demanded that they be rooted in the Bible, illumined by tradition, realized in experience and confirmed by reason—all together but none apart from the others. [italics mine] (p. 31)

In the discussion of theological reflection in practice, the *Book of Discipline* discerns that one may find a point of departure in *Scripture, tradition, experience, or reason*. The discussion continues:

What matters most is that all four guidelines be brought to bear in faithful, serious, theological consideration. Insights arising from serious study of Scripture and tradition enrich contemporary experience. Imaginative and critical thought enables us to understand better the Bible and our common Christian history. (Alexander, 2012, p. 81)

Scripture engaged by tradition, experience, and reason and held in tension with each other provides for a balanced and responsible understanding and practice of the living core of the Christian faith.

II.A. Revealed in Scripture

II.A.1. Methodists' reverence for Scripture. United Methodists have specific texts and resources that they consider to be instructive for personal living, for community life, and for carrying out the mission of the Church. The Protestant canon of Scripture has been historically widely held as the primary instructive resource for United Methodists and their forerunners. According to the *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Alexander, 2012), “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine . . . We are aided by scholarly inquiry and personal insight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (pp. 81–82). *In theory, Scripture interpreted through scholarly inquiry and personal insight directs the mission and movement of the Church.*

II.A.2. Scripture affirming reconciliation. Scripture connects the hearts and minds of contemporary Christians with the hearts and minds of the primary witnesses of and forerunners to the Christian faith. The *Book of Discipline* (2012) establishes, “The Bible is sacred canon for Christian people, formally acknowledged as such by historic ecumenical councils of the Church. Our doctrinal standards identify as canonical thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament” (Alexander, 2012, p. 82). God revealed God’s character and acts of grace to the Hebrews and early Christians. The Biblical writers recorded these revelations. These recordings emerged as what we consider to be Scripture, or the Protestant Christian canon. Therefore,

Methodists and other Christians seek to discover the living core of Christian faith through careful study and reflection of the revealed Protestant Christian canon.

In the Protestant Christian canon, Jesus prayed that those who believed in Him “all may be one” (John 17:21 NKJV). Living out the United Methodist mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 91) continues the movement that Jesus initiated. The Protestant Christian canon presents images that reflect the nature of the Church and her members. Among those images are “children of God” (Romans 8:16), “joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17), “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), “a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9), “a holy temple in which God dwells, the temple of the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 2:21), “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27), and “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). These images illustrate the multi-faceted fellowship of the disciples of Jesus Christ. I have difficulty envisioning any of the Scriptural images of the Church being preceded by a race descriptor (e.g., White “royal priesthood” or Black “holy nation.”). The Biblical vision of the Church is grossly misrepresented by racially segregated local congregations and denominations.

Reconciliation is a dominant theme throughout the Protestant Christian canon. Among the narratives that advance this theme is the story of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible, to whom the LORD declared, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Jonah’s narrative also is thematic of

reconciliation. Jonah was sent as God's ambassador to Ninevah, a nation which exchanged hostilities with Jonah's people, the Israelites. Jonah initially refused to obey God because of disdain for the people of Ninevah. After an epic event with a great fish, Jonah relented and had a transformative ministry in Ninevah. Again, out of disdain for the people of Ninevah, Jonah considered his successful ministry among his adversaries to be failure, even to the point of suicide (Jonah 4:3). The God of Israel illustrated to Jonah how God created and labored for the people of Ninevah and was concerned about their well-being too.

Continuing with the story of the Christian church that emerged in the First Century C.E., the Book of Acts chronicles the diverse representations of the early church. African American pastor, **Rev. Douglas** shared:

If we go back to the Book of Acts and look at who spread the Word, we have people of all different ethnicities who traveled with Paul, who were in the different cities and countries that he went to, who became his followers, who then established churches. That's the way the first Century church was. But we have let so many irrelevant things divide us . . . What did God intend for the Church to do? How did God intend for the Church to be? Again, go back to Acts. Read Acts. Everybody was involved. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

First Century Antioch, which is where disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26) exemplifies a multi-cultural ministry in action, where Greek, Jewish, and African persons converged to live out their faith in community together.

Revelation 7:9 describes heavenly worship attended by "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues." About this passage, White pastor **Rev. Ford** reflected:

We just want worship to look like here what worship looks like in heaven. And Revelation 7:9 tells us that worship in heaven right now is every tribe and tongue and language gathered around the throne giving praise to God. So, we're like if that's what heaven is like and is going to be like, this is a dress rehearsal. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

The Apostle Paul, addressing the apparent division that was within the Church at Corinth, instructed them to recognize God's acts of reconciliation towards them and encouraged them to participate in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The Apostle Peter, initially a staunch Jewish Christian separatist, was opposed to extending ministry to others who were non-Jewish. "The Lord" invited a hungry Peter to partake of a meal that the Lord had prepared, which included meats that were considered unclean to Jewish persons. Peter's response revealed that he would rather stay hungry and rather disobey "the Lord" than to partake of anything considered unclean. "The Lord" instructed, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15), illustrating that those who the Jewish people considered unclean were to be included in the community of God's people. Peter concluded, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Jesus declared, "other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring" (John 10:16) and extended ministry to "heathens" in Gadara (Mark 5:1, Luke 8:26-27), Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21, Mark 7:24), and Samaria (John 4:4, Luke 17:11). The Protestant Christian canon is replete with examples of God's

concern for all people and of God's instructions for God's people to be reconciled with one another.

It would be difficult to present a coherent argument that denies the prevalent reconciliation theme of the Protestant Christian canon using any responsible hermeneutic process. However, some Biblical narratives, if presented in isolation, could support a separatist agenda. Deuteronomy 7:2-3 instructed the Israelites not to intermarry with natives once they occupied the Promised Land. The Apostle Paul, proponent of the ministry of reconciliation, advised Corinthian believers not to be yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The Exodus event, which is the dominant Biblical motif for Black Liberation theologians (Powe, 2009), promoted separation between Israelites, former slaves and "God's chosen people," and Egyptians, former slaveholders. The tension between Israel and Egypt persists throughout the Protestant Christian canon. Egypt is presented as a symbol of oppression and a reminder of how God delivered the oppressed from the oppressor. Ironically, womanist theologians use the narrative of Hagar (Genesis 21:8-29), Egyptian mother to Abraham's son, as their dominant Biblical motif (Powe, 2009). The narrative illustrates how Hagar survives in the wilderness through provision from God, not her oppressor. The tension between the descendants of Hagar and the descendants of Sarah, Abraham's wife, is held throughout the Protestant Christian canon. While tension is held in the Protestant Christian canon between natives and inheritors of the Promised Land, between believers and unbelievers,

and between oppressors and oppressed, reconciliation is consistently the order among “God’s chosen.” However, in the American church, a concurrence of tension between oppressors and oppressed among “God’s chosen” has occurred, making it difficult to translate that which was revealed in Scripture into content that can be vivified in personal experience and/or confirmed by reason.

II.A.3. Scripture applied and contextualized. Along with the complexities revealed within the Protestant Christian canon, some question how first Century doctrines can be imported into twenty-first Century contexts. Further, if all theology is contextual (Jennings, 1997), then interpreting the Protestant Christian canon is also contextual, which adds to the complexities. About discrimination practiced by Christians against others based on same-gender eroticism⁸—a topic which will be addressed in greater detail in *Chapter VI*—African American United Methodist scholar Astor Kirk (2009) explains, “Biblical *literalism* cannot now (and probably never could) offer a spiritually serious and intellectually honest Christian an absolutely reliable guide to responsible ethical conduct in today’s world” (p. 260). While I appreciate Kirk’s literary critique, a wholesale dismissal of the Protestant Christian canon is irresponsible. While Kirk (2009) does not offer a definition for his use of the term *literalism*, he dissects and/or discredits “clobber” passages and abstract commandments that are inconsistent with contemporary cultural values. While

⁸ W. Astor Kirk prefers the term “same gender” over the term “same sex” as the term “sex” has connotations beyond biological differentiation. Kirk relates “erotic” to emotional attraction and stimulation, desire, activity, and satisfaction. Therefore, Kirk defines “same-gender erotic” as “an emotional and erotic attraction to persons of the same gender” (Kirk, 2009, p. 481).

some Biblical passages appear to endorse murder, surrendering persons for rape, war, misogyny, slavery, and other atrocities, dismissing the ethical value of the entire Protestant Christian canon is imprudent for most Christians. In the midst of complexities, the Protestant Christian canon consistently reveals the living core of the Christian faith, which includes commitment and instructions towards reconciliation.

Others are not quite ready to surrender the Protestant Christian canon. Historically, the Black church has held the Protestant Christian canon in high regard. Likewise, The United Methodist Church, which has a primarily White constituency, highly regards the Protestant Christian canon, as reflected in the statements about Scripture being central to practicing responsible theology.

Cartwright (1997) muses:

One of the great paradoxes of the history of Christianity in the United States is that Euro-American evangelicalism and the historic black church share a commitment to the centrality of Scripture, but it is precisely these communions that have been divided in American cultural history. (p. 71)

If both have constituencies have a high regard for the Protestant Christian canon and a consistent theme is to reconciliation, why are Black churches and White churches segregated?

What shall we do with Black/White relations in The United Methodists Church? **Rev. Ford**, a white pastor of a multi-cultural congregation in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, illustrates how Scripture intersects with his personal experience. **Rev. Ford** explained:

I'm also keenly aware that diversity is a gift of the Holy Spirit . . . Ephesians 2, Colossians 3. You, I can't conjure it up. I can't create it. It's a gift of the Holy Spirit. I mean, I was raised lily white. I did not, my school was all white. I went to college in [a state in the North]. There is nothing in my background that should qualify me for leadership in a place like this, other than the Holy Spirit. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

The Protestant Christian canon consistently demands reconciliation. Cartwright (1997) further explains:

Euro-Americans and African-Americans can learn to read Scripture together, but this will not happen if we do not take into account the different ways that we have read Scripture in the past and the ways these practices of reading Scripture help to constitute our largely segregated present. (p. 84)

Okholm (1997) adds, "Hermeneutics can undergird nineteenth-century slavery or twentieth-century Aryan superiority" (p. 7). Acknowledging the contextual nature of hermeneutics and of doing theology is essential to addressing the complexities that are evident in the Protestant Christian canon, which may contribute to Black/White *irreconciliation* in The United Methodist Church. Deddo (1997) boldly proclaims:

Resisting reconciliation is not just a violation of an abstract commandment; it is resistance to the essence of who we are and who God is . . . constitutes a threat not just to the relationships among the races but also to our being and becoming. It is a rejection of God's essential purposes. Those unreconciled cannot enter the kingdom of God. (p. 65)

Regardless of context, the Protestant Christian canon, overall, reflects God's concern for God's people being reconciled with one another. If the high regard

for the Protestant Christian canon informs the living core of the faith, the recurring theme of reconciliation demands a response from adherents towards reconciliation.

II.B. Illumined by Tradition

II.B.1. Methodists' regard for tradition. Secondary to Scripture in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral formula, tradition instructs United Methodists on how to live their faith through providing accounts of how their forebears lived the Christian faith and how their contemporaries interpret the Christian faith. According to United Methodists, tradition illumines the living core of the faith (Alexander, 2012). Following the primary writings of the Protestant Christian canon, God continued and continues to act in human history. Therefore, witnesses continued, providing tradition that sheds light on the Christian faith for those who come after them to follow. This tradition prevents succeeding followers from departing from the faith that many forebears have followed previously. The *Book of Discipline* (2012) reflects about tradition, saying, "The passing on and receiving of the gospel among persons, regions, and generations constitutes a dynamic element of Christian history" (Alexander, 2012, p. 83). Contemporary followers do not arc directly back to the living core of Christian faith that is represented in the Protestant Christian canon. The gospel passed through and has been received in many settings. *The succeeding witnesses documented their successes and failures. We can learn from both.* Writings, creeds, teachings, other literature (Alexander, 2012), and songs provide means

to connect with tradition. Consideration of tradition enlightens the living core of the Christian faith in attempt to grasp meaning in post-First Century contexts.

II.B.2. Creedal tradition. Christian Creeds provide insight into the conversations among early post-primary generations of Christians. Africans were among early Christians who contributed to the canon of tradition, including Clement and Origen of Alexandria, Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage, and Augustine of Hippo (McClain, 1990). *While the very nature of creeds is divisive*, early creeds offer perspectives for how early Christians perceived the nature of the Church (e.g., “holy catholic” from the 4th Century Apostles Creed and 6th Century Gallican Creed). The 4th Century Nicene Creed provides additional insight into the nature of the Church: “We believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic church” (Young, 1989, p. 881). The two descriptors that the creed drafters present that relate to the conciliar nature of the Church are “one” and “catholic.” Throughout the world, smaller units of Christians gather in community to constitute local congregations. Local congregations gather separately from other local congregations. As detached as these local congregations appear to be, early Christians perceived that individual local congregations are collectively “one.” Further, the term “catholic” refers to the “universal” nature of the church, not the Roman Catholic Church. The “catholic”/“universal” church transcends space and time. Local congregations gather in different places and at different times, but are still the Church. Early Christians recognized that in spite of distance and time boundaries, the Church is ubiquitous.

Creeds reveal that in the centuries following the advent of the Church, early Christians maintained an interest similar to their primary forebears in the unity of the Church. However, early creeds created division by establishing boundaries of orthodoxy. Implicitly, creeds also defined what was heretical. In fact, the Creed of Nicaea “anathematizes” (Bettenson & Maunder, 1999, p. 28) those who believe differently than the dominant class. *So, while the early Church had high esteem for oneness and catholicity/universality, they established boundaries within which the one holy catholic (universal) Church was expected to operate.* While these boundaries appear to be theological and not cultural, the distinction between theology and culture can be blurred, as context informs theology (Alexander, 2012).

II.B.3. The tradition of Wesley as an ecumenicist. The teachings of the Protestant Reformers from within the Roman Catholic Church demonstrate movements of resistance against systemic injustices within the institutional church and provide models for recovering social movement. John Wesley, credited founder of Methodism, contributes to the perception of a conciliar Church, particularly through his sermon, *Catholic⁹ Spirit*. In this sermon, Wesley draws from 2 Kings 10:15, which declares, “Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart . . . If it be, give me thine hand” (Outler & Heitzenrater, 1991, p. 300). This passage represents an exchange between Jehu, king of Israel, and Jehonadab, an obscure character that Jehu encountered during wartime. Jehu’s

⁹ Wesley used the term “catholic” to refer to the universal nature of the Church, not the Roman Catholic Church.

invitation to Jehonadab was an extension of compassion and mutuality, as they shared a journey and experiences together. As delightful as the phrase which Wesley quotes is, the journey and experiences that Jehu and Jehonadab share are violent and exclusive to others. Yet, Wesley extracts principles from their exchange to inform what he defines as a catholic spirit.

Like the creeds that were penned before him, Wesley's sermon does not directly address cultural estrangement, but seems to call for theological ecumenicism. Yet, what Wesley offers can be applied to relationships across cultural boundaries as well. Wesley declares that those who love God owe love to all humanity and a peculiar love to others who love God. He further expresses that differences of thought, modes of worship, or other practice should not alienate God's people from one another. Wesley summarizes, "Love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth . . . join with me in the work of God; and let us go on hand in hand" (Outler & Heitzenrater, 1991, p. 307). While Wesley was not addressing Black and White segregation, certainly his invitation to join in the work of God going hand in hand could be applied to persons transgressing cultural or racial boundaries.

II.B.4. Tradition through American Methodism. Following Wesley, succeeding Methodists continue to meet in General Conferences (see Footnote 7 page 103) every four years and document their collective wills in *Books of Discipline*. This dissertation assumes the writings of John Wesley and *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* as primary texts to represent Wesleyan

theology, to which The United Methodist Church subscribes. The Council of Bishops describes the *Book of Discipline*:

As the instrument for setting forth the laws, plan, polity, and process by which United Methodists govern themselves . . . Each General Conference amends, perfects, clarifies, and adds its own contribution to the *Discipline* . . . [The *Discipline*] is the most current statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together . . . We expect the *Discipline* to be found in libraries of local churches, colleges, universities, and seminaries, as well as in the homes of ordained, diaconal, and licensed ministers and lay members of The United Methodist Church. (Alexander, 2012, pp. v–vi)

United Methodists, as reflected in the Council of Bishops statement, have a high regard for the *Book of Discipline*. The *Book of Discipline* includes instruction to United Methodists throughout the world about how United Methodists interpret and practice their faith in contemporary settings.

The *Books of Discipline* chronicle Methodism's response towards the question about what to do with Black Methodists. Within decades of official formation, Blacks were exiled into separate Methodist denominations. Internal conflict continued among White Methodists, particularly between North and South states. According to the 2012 *Book of Discipline* about General Conference in 1844, "dissidents drafted a Plan of Separation, which permitted the annual conferences in slaveholding states to separate from The Methodist Episcopal Church in order to organize their own ecclesiastical structure" (Alexander, 2012, p. 16). White Methodists were *untied* among themselves, even to the point of estrangement and *irreconciliation*. Then in 1939, when White

Methodists reconciled, Black Methodists who remained part of the Methodist Episcopal Church were again exiled into its own organizational structure within the denomination, the Central Jurisdiction. The African American Episcopal (AME) and Colored Methodists Episcopal (CME) denominations were not a part of the 1939 conversation. Cartwright (1999) laments, “When one considers that the 1939 reunion was also the occasion at which the Central Jurisdiction (the denomination structure that segregated congregations by race through the late 1960s) was formed, these omissions [AME and CME] are all the more to be deplored” (p. 126). In 1968, when the Evangelical United Brethren merged with the Methodist Church and dissolved the “Blacks Only” Central Jurisdiction, segregated local congregations continued. Cartwright (1999) observes:

A rhetoric of Christian unity was a prerequisite to the conception of church disciplinary performance for much of the nineteenth century, despite the fact that these denominations existed in separation (and, in some instances, segregation) from one another. [italics mine] (p. 125)

The disciplinary traditions conflicted concerning treatment among those with racial difference. Even when later records intimated reconciliation, segregation was still the dominant order in practice.

Contemporary United Methodist documents proclaim commitment to reconciliation. Again, The United Methodist Church affirms inclusivity, declaring:

We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God’s grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to all people. Inclusiveness means

openness, acceptance, and support that enables [sic] all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. (Alexander, 2012, p. 99)

Further, “A Companion Litany to Our Social Creed” declares, “Today is the day God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends. And so shall we” (Alexander, 2012, p. 142). In the United Methodist baptism liturgy, the celebrant asks candidates, “Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?” (Alexander, 1992, p. 38). The United Methodist communion liturgy entreats, “By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet” (Alexander, 1992, p. 38). *United Methodist contemporary writings consistently express commitment to diversity, solidarity, and inclusivity. However, United Methodist practices do not reflect the same commitment.*

II.C. Vivified by Experience

II.C.1. Methodists’ consideration of experience. An interpretation of Scripture and of tradition promotes an evaluation of experience and promotes personal and social transformation. The theoretical reflections of Scripture and tradition intersect the daily lives of persons through individual and collective experiences. Experience, considered to be another component of the Wesleyan

Quadrilateral, vivifies the living core of the Christian faith (Alexander, 2012). The *Book of Discipline* describes experience as the “. . . the personal appropriation of God’s forgiving and empowering grace” and as “God’s gift of liberating love embrac[ing] the whole of creation” (Alexander, 2012, p. 85). The *Book of Discipline* is filtered through a collective evaluation of experiences of representative United Methodists at General Conference every four years. Scripture offers expressions to help name experiences. Scripture also provides a framework through which expectations for future experiences can be set and through which parameters for the personal living core of the Christian faith can be defined.

II.C.2. Experience of racism in Christianity. Among the other sources which inform Wesleyan theological reflection, a case could be best made from American, Christian, and Methodist experience for continued segregation. Olkham (1997) reports, “The realities of racial injustice and discrimination contradict the biblical and democratic principles of freedom and equality” (p. 9). A survey of historical and present racial conditions in Methodism in America reveals why some are indifferent towards reconciliation or embrace estrangement and being *untied*. Black womanist theologian Cheryl Sanders (1997) shares, “*It can be argued* that Christian racism is the predominant factor that has shaped denominational life in North American Protestant churches, many of whom split before the Civil War over the slavery issue and have yet to be reconciled” [italics mine] (p. 143). *Nevertheless, forgiveness, empowering*

grace, and liberating love that God intended for the whole of creation should be a part of every Christian's experience. Love, unity, affirmation, and liberty in an environment that promotes the justice that is evident in the Protestant Christian canon and in Christian/Methodist tradition should provoke Black and White contemporary Methodists into hope for sustained reconciled experience.

Since its inception in the first century CE, the universal institutional church has a controversial morality record. The institutional church has engaged in many types of corruption, including war, conquest, colonization, genocide, murder, slavery, racism, sexism, and classism. The institutional church has split on many occasions because of inabilities to reconcile among those with different political interests or different understandings of the nature of the Church, of humanity, and/or of God. Nevertheless, in spite of the corruptions and the splits, the Church has a directive to restore, liberate, and reconcile those who were impoverished, captive, and/or oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). Like the universal institutional church, congregations in the Methodist tradition have controversial morality records. However, Methodists have generally historically been advocates and activists for theology and practices that benefit society. The United Methodist Church is a faith tradition within the universal Church whose interpretation of the Church's mission includes a vision towards social transformation. Again, the stated mission of The United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ *for the transformation of the World*" [emphasis mine] (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). The phrase "for the transformation of the world"

was added to the mission statement in 2008 to offer a reason and some direction for the previous shorter mission statement. United Methodists historically have generally expressed and continue to express concern about social transformation. Unfortunately, the expressed concern has not always translated into practice, or experience.

II.C.3. Experience of racism in early American Methodism. Blacks were accepted initially in the Methodist movement, but not for long. Cartwright (1999) surmises that the early ecclesial leaders and other indigenous American Methodists did not have, “the moral imagination and political creativity to see how to maintain both spiritual and external bonds with African American Methodists in the midst of slavery” (p. 110). *Within decades of the beginning of the Methodist movement, Blacks were marginalized, disenfranchised, and/or exiled.* Exiled Black Methodists began new denominations. Other Black Methodists who remained were banished to a segregated organizational structure within the denomination. **Mrs. Courts**, an African American woman who is a member of a multi-cultural congregation in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, remembered:

Now, as far as worship, as far as the races worshiping together, I see that, I see that as something that used to not be. I’ve seen us move from the total Black church into, and I’m going to use the word inclusiveness lightly. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Mrs. Courts further shared:

I can remember the Black Conference. We did not, we did not Conference with them. Or they didn't Conference with us . . . 'Cause we used to have Conference. And of course, going to Lake Junaluska was out of the question . . . And of course, back in, because of segregation, and the sleeping facilities or whatever, of course we didn't, we couldn't sleep in the hotels and things. And we were housed in members' homes. The delegates were housed in members' homes of the host church . . . But then, like I said, they have had to go, as long as in the South, as long as it was in the Southeast Jurisdiction, we could travel, we'd travel, our people traveled that far, if they had money to travel that far for Conference. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

The conditions for Blacks within the segregated organizational structure were much less than ideal. However, Methodists like **Mrs. Courts** remained and sacrificed to maintain a Black presence within the predominantly White division of the Methodist movement.

Just decades ago, in 1968, The United Methodist Church attempted to address the Black experience within Methodism, about which Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) explain, "Many black United Methodists believe that the two conferences are not inclusive, except on paper" (p. 96). **Mrs. Courts** recounted:

I remember in 1968 when they merged the EUB and the whatever, United Brethren and whatever. I remember that. But I didn't really see a whole lot of change behavior-wise behind that 1968 stuff . . . but it's always been a struggle for Black people to be recognized in the total picture. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

White United Methodist scholar, Michael G. Cartwright (1997) adds, “The same congregations that helped to form me as a person of faith were constituted in ways that effectively prevented me from imagining why it was necessary to be reconciled with African-Americans who were also Christians” (p. 73). **Rev. Ford**, a White pastor of a multi-cultural congregation, critiqued:

We have all these boards and agencies that talk about ethnic diversity, but it’s really just for pretend . . . It’s like, if we can have a diverse annual conference meeting or a diverse general conference [see Footnote 7 page 103] delegation than we’ve got diversity. I’m like, “No, you don’t.” Just because you have Black people and White people, maybe a Latino person or two come together annually for a conference or be on your general conference delegation, they’re still going back to their single race churches. So, that’s not diversity. That’s fake diversity. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Every Sunday, United Methodists pass by United Methodist churches, with whom they share a theological framework, denominational heritage, and organizational structure. The race segregation does not persist primarily out of skin complexion differences, but as a result of *separate interpretive traditions—language, theologies, hymnologies, liturgies, homiletics, hermeneutics, and ecclesiologies—constructed while Whites and Blacks occupied separate historical contexts*. At least partially, because these United Methodist congregations have different dominant race/interpretive tradition compositions than theirs, many pass by until they arrive at their United Methodist congregation populated by congregants who share their race identity. Because of racial

irreconciliation, they are unable to share worship spaces, time, stories, resources, authority, and/or experiences.

II.C.4. Experience of racism in contemporary United Methodism. Two centuries of exile and four decades of paper inclusion may have desensitized Black and White United Methodists against racial *irreconciliation* so that sharing worship space, time, resources, stories, authority, and experiences are no longer a primary concern. **Rev. Barrett**, African American pastor of a primarily White congregation, disclosed, “Now they say that it is so heartening on Sunday we are divided. I’ve never taken issue with that. Because you gotta go worship where worship meets your needs” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). Similarly, **Mrs. McCain**, also an African American woman, but a member of an African American congregation, explained:

I’m not going to leave the church that I currently attend simply to integrate another church. I was born and raised in that church. And I still attend that church. Now, I’m not afraid to leave it, but I would leave it for the right reason, and not simply to integrate another church. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Rev. Barrett and **Mrs. McClain** are a part of a considerable number of African Americans and Whites who do not consider Black/White congregational segregation a significant issue. In the survey of Emerson and Smith (2000), only 33 percent of African American Protestants and 4 percent of White Protestants named racism among the top issues with which Christians should be concerned. Some may consider paper inclusion to be sufficient. Some may consider racial

discourse to be a distraction, or even counterproductive. Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues that “color-blind” rhetoric drowns out the voices of those who fight for racial equality and discourages talk about race altogether. Perhaps some have taken the perspective that the challenge is too overwhelming to address. Weems (2012) observes:

As with all mainline denominations, The United Methodist Church has admiral statements and commitments to inclusiveness and diversity. But not one of the mainline denominations has demonstrated that it can reach any racial group other than white as effectively as it reaches white people. (p. 81)

Further, churches are racially charged minefields in which a minor misstep could lead to an explosion. Williams (2011) observes, “No one wants to touch this issue with a ten-foot pole” (p. 20). Whatever the rationale that sustains racial social inertia, like other Protestants in the United States, Black and White United Methodists un-critically and non-consciously (see Footnote 4, page 12) sustain *irreconciliation* by continuing to comply with the spoken and unspoken rules of segregation.

There are advocates of reconciliation who do not necessarily offer justification for racial segregation, but provide advice from their experiences for other who are engaged or are attempting to engage in social transformation through racial reconciliation. *Those who advocate for racial reconciliation face an exhaustive challenge, which requires exceptional personal commitment and affects the advocate’s whole being, including family, finances, church,*

colleagues, and reputation. Spiritual concerns, which DeYmaz and Li (2010) define as forces that “seek to destroy a multi-ethnic church before it ever takes root, by destroying its leaders, discouraging its people and dimming their vision” (p. 194) corresponds with personal concerns, considering the potential emotional tolls that may result. DeYmaz and Li (2010) identify the major categories of spiritual obstacles as discouragement, disruption, danger, and distraction. DeYmaz and Li (2010) share the advice DeYmaz received when entering multi-ethnic ministry, “I don’t recommend it; it’s just too difficult. People want to go to church with others who are like them, and I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that” (p. 59). With that mentality not only embraced, but also conveyed to those considering engaging in ministries of racial reconciliation, racial social inertia will continue.

II.D. Confirmed by Reason

II.D.1. Methodists’ appeal to reason. According to the Wesleyan quadrilateral, intellectual evaluations, or reason, confirm the living core of the Christian faith (Alexander, 2012). Certainly, humanity cannot totally rationalize all of what God has done and/or is doing. Therefore, care must be taken to not overly scrutinize God’s actions with reason. Nevertheless, God equipped humanity with the ability to be thoughtful. Followers of Wesley are instructed to use thoughtful ability as a tool to confirm the living core of the Christian faith through studying the Protestant Christian canon, referencing tradition, and evaluating experience. Methodists are charged to engage the Protestant

Christian canon and the Christian faith to reasonably understand, interpret, articulate, and live them.

II.D.2. The “reasonableness” of American racial segregation. Racial *irreconciliation* is difficult to filter through reason. The issue of church segregation is tremendously complex. Those who are comfortable with the way things are embrace or have developed rationale to justify racial social inertia. Some do not consider racial reconciliation to be personally relevant. Feagin (2010) reminds:

Important changes in the system of racial oppression, such as the official ending of Jim Crow in the late 1960s, have come *only* when many whites have believed those changes to be in their interest—that is, when there is what legal scholar Derrick Bell has called an “interest convergence.” (p. 140)

What evaluation can be offered to Whites and Blacks to reason that racial reconciliation is in their best interest?

In *Our Kind of People*, published 11 years after the formation of The United Methodist Church, C. Peter Wagner offers a defense for purposeful segregation within congregations. Wagner (1979) contends:

When the Bible is interpreted from a missiological perspective, reasonable support is found for the position that God is pleased with Christian congregations that gather together people who come mainly from one homogeneous unit (as well as with churches that encompass different kinds of people, of course). (p. 4)

Wagner interprets a congregation's increase in population as a sign that God is pleased with the congregation. The newly formed United Methodist Church was still developing and testing desegregation strategies when Wagner published *Our Kind of People*. Wagner describes how The United Methodist Church failed in its attempt to address racial segregation by recruiting members of racial, ethnic, or nationality groups as participants with nearby white congregations. Wagner (1979) reports:

United Methodists have established only eleven new churches primarily for blacks in recent years . . . United Methodist leaders have mixed feelings about the dissolution in 1968 of the Central Jurisdiction, which provided black Methodists with a united voice. After ten years of developing a program for merger, it became painfully evident that predominantly black churches were still black, that predominantly white churches were still white, and that as white churches became racially mixed they tended to become predominantly black. (pp. 12–13)

Unfortunately, not much has changed in race relations in The United Methodist Church since Wagner's writings. To address the segregation dilemma that The United Methodist Church failed to resolve, Wagner (1979) promotes the Homogeneous Unit Principle, which was introduced as a theory of sociology by Alfred Shutz and applied to church polity by Donald McGavran. Wagner (1979) argues that within homogeneous units, congregants are able to communicate more freely and relaxed and feel at home among their own kind of people. Wagner (1979) reasons, "My impression is that if any truly heterogeneous churches in America are growing, they are growing with fairly homogeneous units" (p. 16). Wagner affirms his position on the Homogenous Unit Principle in

his memoir published 31 years after *Our Kind of People*, portraying it as sound sociology versus Christian Doctrine. Wagner (2010) contends that since the fastest-growing congregations in the United States are represented by a single-race culture, “Some may dislike this phenomenon, but it cannot be wished away” (p. 112).

Some United Methodist churches were modeled after Wagner’s theory. **Rev. Ford**, a pastor of a church that is presently multi-cultural, indicated, “When I arrived, it was 99% white, which it had grown according to the church growth . . . So, it grew according to church growth principles of the time, which was the Homogeneous Unit Principle” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). Unfortunately, The United Methodist Church did not continue to press for social transformation through racial reconciliation to provide an operational counter-model of Church that is more closely aligned with Jesus’s vision and Methodist tradition.

African Americans and White Americans affirm Wagner’s theory. African Americans **Rev. Barrett** and **Mrs. McCain** support segregated congregations. However, **Mrs. McCain** added, “Now, if most people stay in their church *because* it’s all one race or all one ethnicity or all one color, then that says to me, ‘the church has failed to teach what we should be teaching’” [emphasis mine] (personal interview, 2013, July 1). **Mr. Jamison**, an African American member of a multi-cultural congregation, reasoned:

My personal opinion on why churches are segregated is because people are more comfortable around their own race. When you go to work you don’t have that at option but when you go to worship you do. And it may

not always be because not wanting to be a part of that other person or other race but it is just normal to feel comfortable around your own people. It's normal. That's why we have affirmative action. It is not because someone may not like you because of the color of your skin. It is just people are more comfortable around their own and they are going to draw toward their own people. (personal interview, 2013, July 28)

Rev. Ford offers a different perspective of homogeneity not related to race. **Rev.**

Ford inferred:

If you have theological diversity that brings racial diversity. And the reverse is true . . . Pentecostals prove it to us again and again and again. So, I think as you lift up Jesus, and offer calls for salvation, conversion, holiness, all that, everything else just flows. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Homogeneity can be fairly administered if race is not the primary marker.

However, even in The United Methodist Church, racial homogeneity still pervades. The United Methodist Church has more teaching to do.

From a solely missiological perspective, Wagner's perspective is reasonable. However, if justice, social transformation, reconciliation, or Jesus's vision of the Church is considered, Wagner's argument is insufficient. The Homogeneous Unit Principle could be used to justify segregating a wealthy congregation from a congregation who is impoverished, a congregation of younger congregants from a congregation of older congregants, a Republican congregation from a Democratic congregation, or an African American congregation from a White congregation. None of these reflect Jesus's vision of the Church. Applying practices that leads to increases of congregational

population is commendable. However, these practices must be within the parameters of a more comprehensive perspective of how congregants and congregations are willing to be transformed into Jesus's vision for them and of their commitment to engage in social transformation.

DeYmaz and Li offer several questions that those involved in multi-ethnic ministry have to consider from a pragmatic perspective, including: "What are we to do with politics?" and "What are we to do with language?" (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 100). "What are we to do with undocumented immigrants?" (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 115). "What about music?" (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 132). "What about staffing?" (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 138). "What about children's ministry?" (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 139). Each congregant comes to the church space with personal gifts and graces. They also bring their dysfunctions, which cause tension when encountering others with their own dysfunctions. This is magnified when there are collective dysfunctions among groups that encounter one another. Each of the questions that DeYmaz and Li raise is complex. If the questions are not addressed or addressed only superficially, they may eventually reveal unfiltered attitudes and/or behaviors at inopportune times.

Racial *irreconciliation* in the American institutional church supports and is supported by structures, systems, and institutions that have formed over centuries. Multi-racial ministry is relatively unpopular, so there are not a lot of resources and support for those who are engaged. Some may suggest that they choose to worship in their homogenous setting because they are comfortable

there. The homogenous setting allows the congregants to worship and fellowship without pretense. Emerson and Smith (2000) propose, “Viewed sociologically, religious groups exist to supply members with meaning, belonging, and security (often including eternal salvation). Most people want to satisfy their needs with minimal cost” (p. 144). Many congregants, whether White or Black, are unwilling to sacrifice the meaning, belonging, and security that they sense in a congregation composed of people with similar race identities, heritages, interests, preferences, and appearances.

Many persons who consider taking on the issue of racial reconciliation evaluate their chances against such resistance and withdraw back into being uncritical of and non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12) towards racial *irreconciliation*. The institutional church is a microcosm of the larger society, of which Feagin (2010) notes that a “substantial majority of African Americans today still live in just fifteen of the fifty U.S. states” and that America still reflects a “highly segregated residential pattern” (p. 2). The challenges that those who advocate for racial reconciliation face appear to be insurmountable. Emerson and Smith (2000) advise:

If white evangelicals continue to travel the same road they have traveled thus far, the future does indeed look bleak. The issues are for too complex to be addressed by a homogenous subculture that tends toward high-energy, but simplistic and unidimensional solutions to complex social problems. (p. 170)

Describing the present racial conditions in the U.S. as bleak, exhausting, dysfunctional, and inert is accurate, but not permanent. Race relations in U.S. society can be transformed.

II.D.3. A reasonable call for race reconciliation. School systems, the military, corporations, and other entities in America have provided a counter-response to segregation, with a measure of success. However, given the Church's unique inclusion of confession, forgiveness (Emerson & Smith, 2000), and repentance in social relations, the institutional church has an opportunity to offer more extensive and profound instruments to be used towards racial reconciliation. Emerson and Smith (2000) propose:

Religion can provide the moral force for people to determine that something about their world so excessively violates their moral standards that they must act to correct it. It also can provide the moral force necessary for sustained, focused, collective action to achieve the desired goal. (p. 18)

Further, The United Methodist Church has a captive audience within its constituency of both congregations that have majority White compositions and congregations that have majority Black compositions. To engage the issue through theory and practice would reflect the moral responsibility that the Church is called to represent. Bringing back into the fold Black Methodists who were sent into exile based solely on their race presents some challenges that may seem insurmountable, which is reflected by the continuous presence of *irreconciliation* after more than four decades. Certainly, bitterness and guilt will

have to be addressed, even if they have been ignored for so long that they may have been suppressed and may seem trivial.

A survey of a theology of racial reconciliation through a Wesleyan quadrilateral lens supports a movement towards racial reconciliation. This application of experience and reason to Scripture and tradition represents a responsible and participatory manner through which United Methodists approach teaching and learning. Love, unity, and reconciliation is revealed as the nature of the Church in Scripture and illumined by tradition (e.g., the writings, creeds, and songs). While historic and present experiences have some contradictions against tradition and Scripture, the hope of what is possible exceeds our history and present experiences.

The institutional church can be on the cutting edge of social transformation. In fact, as Rivers (1997) asserts, “There is no other quarter [than the church] that has the institutional, moral or spiritual capacity to bring this country back together again” (p. 21). *While Blacks and Whites may personally experience extraordinary forgiveness, affirmation, and love as part of a racially diverse beloved community, as part of the one holy apostolic universal Church, they have exceptional capacities for social racial transformation.* They also have reasonable responsibilities towards their Scriptural and traditional heritage that may transgress their comfortable racially *untied* congregational settings. Feagin (2010) pleads, “We need to encourage more people to defy the logic of self-preservation and disrupt racist performances that reinforce the white racist

frame” (p. 206). Blacks and Whites in The United Methodist Church can lead the broader culture in social transformation through sharing hearts, hands, space, time, financial resources, personnel, language, stories, traditions, authority, interpretive frameworks, and experiences.

Conclusion

Why should White Christians want to reconcile with Black Christians?

Why should Black Christians want to reconcile with White Christians?

Comprehensive theological reflection related to church unity by using the Wesleyan quadrilateral of reason, experience, tradition, and Scripture reveals significant ambiguities. Pragmatically, congregations segregated based on race is reasonable from a missiological perspective. Persons connect with those with whom they have affinity. Also, racially segregated congregations provide dwelling spaces that shelter and affirm African Americans in spite of the larger American white racial frame. The American experience and the Methodist experience in the U.S. contributed and continue to contribute to Black and White Methodists being *untied* from one another. However, the more extended Christian experience is much more *united* than the Methodist experience in America. *Further, the United Methodist Church is a reasonable site from where racial social transformation can occur, given its mandate, Scriptural heritage, written tradition, social responsibility, spiritual capacity, and organizational structure.*

Powe (2009) discerns, “Interestingly, some individuals (usually within the UMC) want to knock the fence down immediately without addressing the just-us issues [issues particular to race communities] between these communities” (p. xiv). Doing either Black liberation and reconciliation theology or Wesleyan theology responsibly does not allow for that option. Both theologies share a concern for social justice. The general rules of Wesleyan theology demand a response to the dominant U.S. white racial frame, which threatens the agency, autonomy, and unrestrictive sanctuary that Black liberation and reconciliation theology demands for all who share hearts, hands, space, time, language, financial resources, personnel, stories, traditions, authority, interpretive frameworks, and experiences. The repentance and forgiveness required by Black liberation and reconciliation theology can only be mediated by the grace of God that Wesleyan theology emphasizes. The work of untying and uniting is more involved than just integrating or de-segregating space. Instead of simplistic, superficial, one-dimensional solutions, Black liberation and reconciliation theology and Wesleyan theology call for engagement with critical consciousness and inviting others into meaningful and substantive dialogue. *Irreconciliation* from an un-critical and non-conscious perspective is indeed insurmountable. However, if The United Methodist Church awakens and comprehensively addresses the contradictions that accompany *irreconciliation* being a part of the Christian experience, The United Methodist Church has the mandate, the heritage, the precedence, and the spiritual capacity to intervene

against social inertia and towards a more racially just United Methodist Church and society.

CHAPTER V

WHAT IS BEING DONE WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS?

*We share each other's woes,
our mutual burdens bear;
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.*
—John Fawcett, 1782

Introduction

In *Chapters II* through *IV*, I evaluate social relations primarily from a denominational perspective. In *Chapter V*, I explore social relations at a congregational level through personal interactions. I analyze narratives of clergypersons and laypersons of churches in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodists Church who are a part of congregations which transgress race boundaries. Again, the narratives from the interviewees will be distinguished by their *pseudonyms presented in boldfaced font*. The Western North Carolina Conference includes over 1,100 churches, of which less than 1% qualifies as racially diverse according to commonly accepted standards (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 15). No African American pastor serves any United Methodist congregation in western North Carolina that can be qualified as diverse according to commonly accepted standards of the majority racial group being less than 80% of the congregation (DeYmaz & Li, 2010, p. 15). Perhaps White United Methodist congregants in western North Carolina reflect what

Wagner (1979) suggests: White Christians do not typically follow African American leadership or remain as a minority constituency in a congregation.

Chapter V is divided into two parts. In the first part of this chapter “Black Church Spirit within White Church Social Frames,” I analyze the narratives of two African American clergypersons who serve as pastors of congregations with majority White constituencies. In Part II “White Pastors Serving Multi-Ethnic Congregations,” I analyze the narratives of 18 additional interviewees—two pastors and 16 laypersons—from two congregations with White pastors that self-identify as multi-ethnic and are effective at transgressing cultural boundaries. I present *common language, common themes, common experiences, and meta-narratives* drawn from the narratives that may contribute to effectiveness in racial reconciliation efforts for The United Methodist Church. Further, I explore the complexities and ambiguities from the narratives. Drawing from interviewees’ narratives and related literature, I conclude with strategies designed to intervene against unjust racial structures and to contribute to social transformation through racial reconciliation in The United Methodist Church and beyond.

Part I. Black Church Spirit Within White Church Social Frames

Rev. Barrett and **Rev. Douglas** represent a small sample of African American pastors who serve churches with majority White constituencies. While they represent a small sample, their narratives provide substance for conversation about engaging in ministry that transgresses race boundaries. **Rev. Barrett** is an African American woman pastor who serves a congregation with a

majority White constituency. The congregation is in a rural town in western North Carolina. **Rev. Douglas** is an African American man pastor who also serves a congregation with a majority white constituency. The congregation where he serves is in the downtown area of an urban city. Both churches have approximately 200 members and approximately 100 weekly worship attendees. The pastors of these churches offered narratives that describe their perceptions of their contexts, express their affective responses to their contexts, and reflect the critical role that holy conversation has in transgressing race boundaries in local church settings.

I.A. Life in Exile

African American pastors who serve congregations with different race compositions are uncommon and their narratives are critical for establishing a course for intervening against the present social order and towards a more just social race frame in the United Methodist Church and in American society. Through their personal narratives, African American Pastors **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** offer important insights as they convey their affective responses about serving congregation with majority White constituencies. In their narratives, they offer observations about the social order of their present context. They provide perspective about being in exile in race settings that are not only different than theirs, but which have been historically hostile to their own race social frame.

Rev. Barrett's and **Rev. Douglas's** *asymmetric power relations* (Casey, 1993) contribute to ambiguity in their contexts. In their role as pastor, they have a measure of implied power. However, their *ex-officio* power as pastor is in tension with their deficit of power related to their race. About serving in a primarily White denominational context, African American pastor **Rev. Barrett** observed, "There are so many areas, if you sat on the [Board of an agency of the Western North Carolina Conference], you'd see it all the time. If you're in these committees, you see it. It's there. But we fight our way through it" (personal interview, 2013, August 7). About the salary disparity between pastors of Black congregations and pastors of White congregations in the Western North Carolina Conference, **Rev. Barrett** protested, "I don't think it's fair that this pastor should make this and that pastor doing the same job should make less" (personal interview, 2013, August 7). More locally, **Rev. Barrett** described her reception into the congregation where she serves as pastor. **Rev. Barrett** anticipated a hostile exchange. She was surprised by the way in which she was received by the congregation. She remembered, "The Lord's already prepared me for something different and I'm ready to go. Or, so, I thought. When I got there, the people were warm and loving" . . . "And they just received me so openly" (personal interview, 2013, August 7). Later she discovered that, while on the surface, the reception was cordial, all congregants did not share the same sentiments. One congregant carried a disdain towards **Rev. Barrett** that she did not discover until that person's funeral. **Rev. Barrett** recalled, "I never was made

aware that there was a real issue. You always know some undertones and some things that are going on. But I never heard any outward statements” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). Overall, though, **Rev. Barrett’s** *reception into the local congregation* was amicable.

While it was not hostile, **Rev. Douglas’s** reception into the congregation where he serves as pastor was not quite as amicable. **Rev. Douglas** mentioned, “I’m still breaking down some and building on some relationships where people are just hesitant about the fact that they’ve got an African American pastor at this church” (personal interview, 2013, July 25). Further, **Rev. Douglas** recalled:

There’s one man at [the church] that I know right now in this church that said, some years ago that “there’ll never be a woman or an African American in the pulpit of this church.” He’s had to live with both and he’s here every Sunday. That’s why I say, “you have to be flexible,” because you’re gonna hit some of that stuff face to face. You have to be able to stand and present the Gospel. Not argue with somebody. But present the Gospel . . . Now, didn’t win everybody over. Didn’t expect to. Don’t expect to do that in any church. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Rev. Douglas encountered blatant bigotry, but continued in his task as pastor.

The person demonstrating bigotry had to adjust his perspective as he was confronted by the presence of an African American in the pulpit every Sunday.

Rev. Douglas revealed how this phenomenon occurs at a denominational level.

Rev. Douglas noted, “Churches are asked if you are willing to accept a pastor of another ethnicity, are you ready to accept a cross-cultural appointment? And many of them, according to the Bishop, are saying they do not want it” (personal interview, 2013, July 25). That churches are asked if they will accept a pastor of

a different race identity is troubling. The query empowers local churches to dictate their level of engagement with persons who have different race identities than the majority constituency of the congregation. **Rev. Douglas** observed a general resistance against African American pastors among White congregations. Whether explicit or implicit, **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** anticipated resistance and received a measure of resistance as they entered the White church context as the pastor. Yet, both pastors courageously continued to serve as pastor, even in hostile settings.

The pastors *anticipated resistance* from the White congregants at the churches where they were appointed. They also received destructive feedback from their African American colleagues as they assumed their appointments across race boundaries. **Rev. Barrett** lamented, “Honestly, I think that when the word got out that I was being sent to [the present church appointment], I thought, I think my colleagues said, ‘Why her?’ I didn’t have nothing to do with it. I didn’t ask for it” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). **Rev. Douglas** added:

I’ve heard comments from some of my colleagues that they have forgotten who they are. Some have said about people that, “they just trying to climb a ladder in the church.” Negative things. Not looking at the fact that, you know, that this is God’s church and we are to minister to whomever. (Personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Unfortunately, in exile, the African American pastors serving White congregations were not fully accepted in their new social context. Social schizophrenia is accompanied by social amnesia, as pastors serving across race boundaries

forget who they are. At the same time, they were no longer fully accepted in their own social context. Again, both pastors *continued to serve courageously*.

As they continued to serve courageously, they have attempted to transgress race boundaries with grace and dignity for all involved. **Rev. Douglas** recalls bringing the predominantly White congregation together with a predominantly Black congregation for a special worship service. While sharing physical space, Black congregants and White congregants segregated themselves from one another with a church aisle as the dividing line. **Rev. Douglas** responded:

Before the service started, I said, “No, we’ve gotta stir this up. We’re not sitting on . . .” And I said it this way, “. . . Black on one side, White on the other. We’re not gonna sit like that. We’ve gotta stir it up. So, get up and move.” And people did get up. But, you’ve got to force the issue in a loving way [*laughter*]. (Personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Towards an eternal perspective, **Rev. Barrett** concluded:

When we get to heaven, aint gone be no White heaven, aint gone be no Black heaven. It’s gone be one heaven where there is one Lord. And we gone all worship there together. Now, I might go down a couple of clouds to the Black church where we be just patting [clapping] and having a good time [*laughter*]. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

As evidenced in the last two excerpts and several others, Rev. Douglas and Rev. Barrett often shared their narratives *through laughter*, even at times what they were sharing was *not obviously humorous*. West alludes to this phenomenon in his discussion of black Christian eschatological praxis against suffering. West

(1999) submits, “The radically comic character of Afro-American life—the pervasive sense of play, laughter and ingenious humor of blacks—flows primarily from the profound Afro-American Christian preoccupation with the tragedy in the struggle for freedom in a tragic predicament” (p. 439). Even in a tragic predicament, with radically comic character, **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** demonstrate courageous leadership towards transgressing race boundaries in ways that maintain dignity for representatives from each race group. **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** model practices, behaviors, and attitudes have socially transformative potential for those to whom and for those from whom they have been exiled.

I.B. Accepting the Task

Rev. Douglas and **Rev. Barrett** found themselves having to manage tension between their connection with the Black experience and their majority White church context. **Rev. Douglas** professed:

Individually, you get to be schizophrenic [*laughter*]. Last night, I went to [African American] United Methodist Church revival, an African American congregation, African American preachers, singing, very different from what I hear here at [present church]. Very different. And, you get to appreciate it, but sometimes you, there are moments where you don’t know where you belong [*laughter*]. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

African American pastor **Rev. Douglas** revealed, “Now, of course, the music is quite different, only because that’s the way we’ve grown up. With singing different songs and doing them different ways, even the same song” (personal interview, 2013, July 25). Beyond the conflicting cultural preferences, which are

significant, even more significant, **Rev. Douglas** addressed the how he responds to the hostility he encounters in the White church context:

You gotta have a thick skin but you also have to be very flexible. You have to have a thick skin, because there're gonna be some people who don't want you. You might be the best preacher. You might have the best theology. But because you're different, they don't want you. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Considering the differences and hostilities that **Rev. Douglas** faces in the White church context, an affective response extending well beyond a *sense of schizophrenia* would be understandable.

While not using the term, “schizophrenic,” **Rev. Barrett’s** experiences closely parallel **Rev. Douglas’s**. About the White congregants who she serves as pastor, to **Rev. Douglas’s** reflections **Rev. Barrett** added, “They don’t know our struggles. And they don’t understand it. Though they have caring hearts. You know, it’s far . . . if you ain’t lived this walk, you don’t know it” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). Recalling her Black church experience with Black worshippers, **Rev. Barrett** imparted, “If I can’t say, ‘Amen,’ if the pastor don’t step on my toes and cause me to live right, I ain’t had church” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). Contrasting her Black church experience with her present White church context, she shared, “Sunday is so different. They’re quiet. They’re, they want to be in by 11, out by 12. And that’s difficult to allow the Spirit to move . . . not impossible, but very difficult” (personal interview, 2013, August

7). Wrestling with managing the tension between her Black church experience and her White church context, **Rev. Barrett** further explained:

How do I express my love for God that's not offensive to you? 'Cause if I talk too loud I'm yelling. If I don't talk loud enough, "we can't hear you." And I have a voice, I learned this at [seminary], my voice goes down. So, I have to use a microphone. And, if I get loud, and that person [monitoring volume levels] is not turning me down, for them, that's offensive. "It's too loud in here." So, learning how to worship, it took probably another two years to really get comfortable. And gear sermons for them should not be over twenty minutes. 'Cause I have people who tell me, "you preached twenty three minutes today. Good word, but it was twenty three minutes." [laughter]. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

While **Rev. Barrett** talked about *tone and volume*, neither **Rev. Douglas** nor **Rev. Barrett** talked directly about *language* in their narratives. In her interviews, **Rev. Barrett** used many African American colloquialisms. **Rev. Douglas** did not use quite as many. Hopkins (2000) proclaims, "Language has the revolutionary or counterrevolutionary force to reflect, create, transform, and interpret reality. Similarly, words, paragraphs, and sentences can facilitate participation in the ownership of wealth" (p. 267). I suspect, as **Rev. Barrett** has to adjust volume to accommodate the congregation, she also has to adjust language, surrendering reflective, creative, transformative, and interpretive power that she has through language. Still, like **Rev. Douglas**, **Rev. Barrett** continued to serve courageously and sacrificially in a hostile setting and in a setting very different from her own race social frame.

While they recognize that conflicting cultural preferences exist in *music*, *length of service*, *theological emphases*, *histories*, and *preaching styles*, they

also recognize many similarities among the distinctive church settings of different race congregations. They and the congregations where they worship and serve have learned to *recognize similarities while celebrating difference*. **Rev. Barrett** observed, “Same struggles no matter where you go” (personal interview, 2013, August 7) and about the White congregants elaborated, “They called and say, ‘I’m having surgery,’ just like an African American Church, ‘and we want you there’” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). **Rev. Douglas** mused, “I’m surprised at how much [the church] just enjoys the freedom that I try to exercise in the pulpit” (personal interview, 2013, July 25) and demonstrated:

They will sometimes sing a song that I am familiar with, but I learned it a different way. And when they finish, I say, “Well, let me sing that song the way I know it.” So that we bring all that together. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Recognizing the similarities while celebrating differences appear to be critical for **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** to transcend the sense of schizophrenia. A profound sense of identity is also helpful. **Rev. Barrett** shared:

You gotta go in there being who you are. You’re gonna learn some things. And if I talk too loud, it’s offensive. They can’t handle it. Find the balance between *being who you are* and still *being what they need* in a manner of which they can hear you. Because, just like any other congregation, they want a word. And they appreciate being taught. But you still, you must be you. And just like going into any congregation, find that balance. And get, find your time to get to know the people as people. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

Explaining his source of inspiration, **Rev. Douglas** added:

The only way I know how to approach any of those situations is being who I am . . . I'm here for God, *not here because this makes me feel good* or that sounds good or I don't understand that. I'm here to do what God has called me to do. So you've gotta go back to that. It's a lot of work. A lot of that is, in outside of the service—the visiting, the calling, the building of *relationships outside the church* is probably as valuable, if not more valuable, than what happens in the pulpit. 'Cause when people know that you're there as a pastor, regardless of ethnicity, that's when things change.

Accepting the assignment of pastor to a congregation of a different race is daunting; particularly for an African American pastor serving White congregants of the dominant White racial social frame. **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas** embody grace-filled responses through celebrating differences, embracing similarities, maintaining profound senses of calling through faith and “thick skin” that exemplify gracefully serving as pastors across race boundaries.

I.C. Restoring the Methodist Practice of Holy Conversation

Rev. Barrett and **Rev. Douglas** call attention to the opposition they face and illustrate the critical role of those who commit to the task of transgressing race boundaries in the church. *Individual courage, grace, faith, and sacrifice are critical.* Beyond individual effort, moving the church towards a more just race social structure requires *social action*, as well. Strategizing for establishing permanent shared facilities is premature, given the historic and present U.S. cultural frame, which permeates through United Methodist culture and supports unjust power differentials based on race. Powell (1997) admits, “Merging these

two worlds can be complicated for blacks and whites” (p. 153). Merging worlds while ignoring the dilemma is not sustainable. Until power distribution is more equitable and true repentance and forgiveness is realized among racial groups, Powe (2009) suggests that African Americans resist permanent physical separation, while at the same time, resist the culturally assigned subservient. To bridge the chasm that is between the two, Powe offers the *penultimate hope of engaging friendships* that leads to reconciliation. Powe suggests that these friendships will provide a means to address deep hurts while trying to build community and to address the structures of whiteness with the oppressors. Holy conversation is a means to facilitate substantive sharing while the institutional church is in transition towards more just race relations. *Holy conversation* is a historic Wesleyan means of grace, which Haynes (2010) describes as, “[persons exchanging] the journey of souls, the peaks and valleys, the doubts and fears, the joys and God-moments” (p. 83). Holy conversations among these engaging friends will allow for debunking myths and deconstructing the dominant White racial frame for a *more substantive and sustained sharing of space, time, resources, and stories*.

Rev. Johnson and the church where he serves as pastor have hosted conversations and friendships relatively effectively through the Institute for Dismantling Racism non-profit group housed at the church. **Rev. Johnson** explained:

I did a lot of work with the Institute for Dismantling Racism, where we'd go into institutions and help teach them about an in-depth analysis about racism, White privilege. I don't feel like the church is ready to have that conversation. Maybe they are, maybe they aren't. Some churches are. I'm not even sure the African American churches are (personal interview, 2013, July 8).

Rev. Johnson has extensive experience doing ministry across cultural boundaries. He does not feel like the institutional church is ready. Even among congregants whom he serves as pastor, which are well-beyond most other United Methodist congregants in Western North Carolina in terms of readiness for conversation, I observed a conversation during an interview that raised questions for me. While discussing one of the African American pioneers who was instrumental in “desegregating” their congregation, **Mrs. Matthews**, a White woman, described the pioneer as the church’s “Mother Teresa” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Ms. Wilson**, an African American woman, interjected, “Rosa Parks of [the congregational]” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Mrs. Matthews** retorted, “Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks, *all the same thing*” (personal interview, 2013, July 8), *shutting down the exchange*. While Mother Teresa and Rosa Parks are both iconic heroes, they apparently are not the same for **Ms. Wilson**, who made a point to associate the “desegregating” pioneer with the hero that she represented for **Ms. Wilson**. **Mrs. Matthews’s** dismissal of **Ms. Wilson’s** insertion demands critique. Certainly, **Ms. Wilson** does not have the right to define who the pioneer is for **Mrs. Matthews**. However, friendship demands that each friend to hear the other friend. This conversation illustrated

that readiness is questionable, even in churches that are effective at having racially charged conversations.

While, **Rev. Johnson** rightly expressed doubt about the general institutional church's readiness, he still pressed forward with the conversation in his congregation and community. I share concern about the institutional church's readiness with **Rev. Johnson**. I am also concerned that the institutional church will never be completely ready. Like **Rev. Johnson**, *I recommend that the institutional church presses through the oppression, the deep hurts, and the non-readiness and have holy conversations.*

United Methodists have a history availing themselves to be a means through which God extends grace through holy conversation. Haynes (2010) ponders:

I think Wesley was onto something that might be even more necessary in the 21st century than it was in the 18th. Until the 1850s, the essential socio-spiritual vehicle for Methodists was the class meeting . . . Today we need to re-invent some version of the class meeting. We need holy conversation! (p. 85)

Class meeting was a site where holy conversation occurred in early Methodism.

Class meeting is different than they typical contemporary Bible study.

Contemporary Bible study is voluntary. In contemporary Bible study, oftentimes a teacher primarily shares content with students. Early Methodists were required to attend class meetings in small groups of ten to twelve persons. Class meeting was a source of nurture and accountability. The Book of Discipline establishes

that one of the duties of the class leader was to see each person in class at least once per week: “(1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor” (Alexander, 2012, p. 76). Holy conversation was an effective means to initiate and sustain a national movement. Holy conversation will be useful to a movement of social transformation through race reconciliation.

With some application of theories and practices from Black church interpretive traditions, holy conversation in The United Methodist Church is redeemable and useful towards racial reconciliation. Following the precedent set by Wesley and his contemporaries, United Methodists should intentionally engage in holy conversation to transform The United Methodist Church and the local congregations into *spaces where exchanges of grace, love, and ideas are normative*. *To re-generate the movement* and to be effective at the mission, United Methodists need holy conversation!

Members of local congregations can engage in holy conversation intentionally and consistently through class meeting with members connecting across congregational and race boundaries. In class meetings, persons are organized in small groups to have substantive conversations about their temporal and spiritual affairs. The Methodist movement began through class meetings. The individual classes connected to form societies, which Marquadt describes as centers of education. Marquadt (1992) conveys, “Here no one was considered

more important than any other . . . Everyone had the sense of belonging as a full-fledged member of the group; that shared sense of solidarity gave them self-confidence and courage for self-expression” (p. 59). The class meeting was an ideal atmosphere for friendship and transformation. The Methodist movement grew out of this very effective methodology. Unfortunately, the class meeting structure has not generally survived the institutionalization of the denomination. Through a recovery of the historic Wesleyan class meeting structure, United Methodist churches can be transformed into unrestrictive sanctuaries for engaging friendship and sharing holy conversations for its congregants and surrounding communities.

In liturgical settings, *more voices and more ways of expression* can generate social and cultural movement and increase the possibility of transformation. Haynes (2010) recognizes, “Few exchanges in one’s life surpasses [*sic.*] an honest preacher sharing with a congregation what he or she has experienced with God” (p. 86). Preaching has historically been a primary pedagogical tool in the Church (see Footnote 5, page 13). Instead of or alongside the typical liturgical setting where a few people sing songs that were pre-written and one honest preacher shares her or his experience with God, United Methodist congregations can be spaces where various honest congregants with diverse ethnic identities have opportunities to share what they have experienced with God.

In addition, Williams (2011) offers the following suggestions for conversations in local church settings: teach unity, diversity, and inclusion in every service; do community service projects; swap pulpits; conduct online meet-ups and social media gathering to discuss issues of diversity in local churches; promote books, materials, and movies that promote a message of diversity in local churches; work with media outlets to produce news stories about diversity in local churches; write letters to the editor of the local newspaper; host a roundtable discussion in the local community; inject creative elements promoting diversity into drama and worship services; and share [Bible verses] that encourage diversity in the local churches (p. 190). With open hearts, open minds, and open doors, these Black and White United Methodists should strategize and act without limiting possibility. *These practices, behaviors, and activities may not eliminate two centuries of exclusion, segregation, and exile, but they will move local congregations towards social transformation through racial reconciliation.*

On a denominational level, The United Methodist Church has general conferences (see Footnote 7 page 103) and jurisdictional conferences that meet every four years and regional conferences that meet annually. The *Book of Discipline* advises, "The United Methodist Church is a connectional structure maintained through its chain of conferences" (Alexander, 2012, p. 235). These conferences are made up of delegates of laypersons from local congregations and of clergy members who converge to resolve legislative matters on behalf of

their constituents. The issues they attempt to resolve relate to petitions and concerns raised by persons and groups throughout the denomination. These conferences are often too large to facilitate meaningful conversation. The conferences often are inundated with administrative tasks. Also, the time between conferences allows for the atmosphere to become so charged to an extent that meaningful conversation is nearly impossible. Crises occur between scheduled conferences, about which the denomination is unable to provide a timely response. However flawed the conferencing process may be, it provides a process through which the denomination's positions may be revisited, and the people of the denomination are empowered to speak to and for the people of the denomination. United Methodists can be more effective at holy conferencing. United Methodists should embrace advances in technology in order to promote *more timely and inclusive self-governance*. Given changes in the ways that information is shared and advances in communication technology, perhaps The United Methodist Church could consider more real-time and inclusive ways to stay connected and make decisions (e.g., computerized surveys, blogs, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing).

Regional episcopal areas, or annual conferences (see Footnote 2, page 4), face similar challenge. Advanced technology can provide a means for more perspectives to be shared more frequently here, too. In addition, there are other means to advocate for more just racial relations at the annual conference level. From the annual conference level, the resident bishop appoints clergy members

to local churches. More just racial relations can be promoted through the *clergy appointment-making process*. **Rev. Barrett** sensed, “I see cross-racial appointments, now this is just my opinion, I see our Bishop trying very hard to make things right within our Conference” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). However, **Rev. Barrett** suggested that more conversations have to occur and friendships have to be built before making appointments across cultural boundaries. **Rev. Barrett** critiqued:

If you don't do your prep work, it's apt to fail . . . [the Bishop] hasn't walked in our shoes either . . . Before you send someone out, make sure that congregation has been prepared and ready to receive. Because if they're not, *you can kill some pastors*. Had I gone in fighting the Black/White issue, I would have been defeated. I had some rough nights over it, but it was just me and God, struggling with who I am versus who they are in worship. But if the congregation had been more prepared, I think it would have been better. And getting our congregations prepared before you're gonna send somebody, saying, “We're mixing this thing up.” We're just sending pastors. Telling them now, getting them taught. Rather than when you're getting ready to send somebody is key. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

Prior to being appointed as a pastor, **Rev. Barrett** participated in holy conversations that prepared her for an appointment across cultural boundaries.

Rev. Barrett reminisced:

We got a chance to sit around the table, get to know one another, ask tough questions, we were preparing for what was coming. And we were going to start worshipping on certain occasions together and doing other things. Well, there was great preparation done to get us to that point. And we saw the difference. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

Rev. Barrett called for and illustrated how appointments can be made responsibly and sustainably across cultural boundaries through holy conversation.

As **Rev. Barrett** suggested, tough questions accompany holy conversation. Holy conversation will likely be met with resistance. Advocacy through holy conversation requires discernment and intentionality. **Rev. Johnson**, a White pastor, offered a possible approach:

What we've learned in doing the work is that certain things can be said by White folks, certain things can be said by people of Color. So, if [an African American man] stood up at Conference and said, "I think we ought to move towards anti-racism," people would say, "Oh, great, that angry Black man." You know, but if I stood up and said it, they wouldn't know what to do with that. I mean, so I could go in and say something harsh and [the African American man] could calm 'em all down. [*laughter*]. You know, so I think that's the kind of approach that we would need to do through the Methodist system. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

While some might criticize the approach as being deceptive, it illustrates how, in the dominant white racial cultural frame, "who is saying" is as important, if not more, than "what is being said." Holy conversation at a macro level has to be sensitive to that reality.

United Methodists have a heritage of integrating theory and practice, which is vital to effective holy conversations. Maddox (1994) informs, "if there was a process to [John] Wesley's doctrinal reflection, it is best described as a 'hermeneutic spiral' of becoming aware of and testing preunderstandings" (p. 47). United Methodist should, likewise, immerse themselves in a continuous process

of awareness and theoretical reflection being tested through practice. Through shared commitment and shared discourse, the theorists and practitioners together can engage in a “hermeneutic spiral” (Maddox, 1994, p. 47) of reflecting and applying social intervention “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 91).

Seminaries and theological schools are the primary sites where theory and practice intersect. Pastors of United Methodist local churches are prepared to advance the pedagogy of The United Methodist Church through local pastors’ school, courses of study, and seminary programs (Alexander, 2012). The United Methodist Church endorses theological schools to prepare clergy (Alexander, 2012). Unfortunately, beyond the seminary or theological school experience for clergy, there is a *disconnection between primary theorists and practitioners*.

Rev. Johnson reflected:

When I graduated from Divinity School, nobody in the Divinity School wanted to teach ecclesiology, ‘cause none of them went to church. None of my professors did. So, they were all university based, academic, and *they all hated church*, even the preaching professor. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Holy conversation is a missing element that can breach the chasm between theorists and practitioners for more responsible theological practice towards social transformation through Wesley’s hermeneutic.

Freire (1998) cautions, “Critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice. Otherwise theory becomes simply

'blah, blah, blah,' and practice, pure activism" (p. 30). Okholm (1997) adds, "We must marry head and heart, academy and church, systematician and pastor" (p. 9). To address the disconnect between theorists and practitioners in The United Methodist Church, scholars from the theological schools must think and act beyond academic spaces and assume roles as public intellectuals, building relationships through continual conversations with practitioners. Otherwise, when a theorist lectures in practitioners' space without the relational bonds and continuous engagement, practitioners are likely to hear "blah, blah, blah."

Dr. John Kinney, Dean of the School of Theology at Virginia Union University, shared in a lecture at the Hood Theological Seminary about a "blah, blah, blah" experience that he had as a recent seminary graduate preaching to a congregation in a local church. He described how he waxed eloquently using profound theological concepts and jargon, complete with citations from contemporary and ancient theologians. At the conclusion of the service, Dr. Kinney described a conversation that he had with one of the elder congregants. The congregant said to him something like, "Son, you obviously know a lot about what you talk about and want to tell us what you know. But if you want me to drink from the fountain that is springing up within you, you better put it in a cup I can recognize." There are fountains of knowledge that have transformational potential that are springing up from the campuses of seminaries and theological schools from which congregations of local churches or local communities will never drink if they are contained on the seminary campuses, only sporadically

sprinkled in local churches, or poured out in large quantities into congregations who are not prepared to receive.

The congregants of local churches and annual conference have untapped intellectual capacities. As congregants engage in holy conversation and are immersed in a hermeneutic spiral, they will further expand their intellectual capacity. They will recognize egregious and pervasive social issues, reflect theoretically and theologically, and provide sound and responsible social intervention in a continuous spiral. Theological scholars should translate the potentially transformative theory from academic settings with the public on theological school campuses and in local churches and other public spaces that have been reclaimed and/or transformed into unrestrictive sanctuaries often enough, with accessible terminology, and through common media and technology so that congregants may be able to drink from it in a recognizable cup. Practitioners should also be prepared and encouraged to produce their own fountains of grace, love, and ideas that can contribute to social transformation through racial reconciliation.

Part II. White Pastors Serving Multi-Ethnic Congregations

Rev. Johnson and **Rev. Ford** represent a small sample of White pastors who serve United Methodist congregations with diverse constituencies. Both **Rev. Johnson** and **Rev. Ford** serve congregations in urban cities in western North Carolina. **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor of a mid-sized congregation which has approximately 400 members and approximately 200 weekly worship

attendees. The large congregation where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor has approximately 1,400 members and approximately 1,800 weekly worship attendees. I also interviewed sixteen laypersons from the two congregations—four from the mid-sized congregation and twelve from the large congregation. Like the narratives of **Rev. Barrett** and **Rev. Douglas**, these eighteen narratives provide substance for conversation for engaging in ministry that transgresses race boundaries.

II.A. Shared Themes

II.A.1. New/renewed ministry settings. One of the apparent common traits among the two congregations was an atmosphere of newness among the pastors and the congregants. The large church is 22 years old, which is relatively young for a church. The mid-size church is much older, but it went through a significant transition 15–16 years ago when the membership dropped to 12–15 persons. The membership reduction for the mid-size church allowed them to reset with a group of committed persons who were open to possibility. This atmosphere of newness likely had an effect on the congregations' openness to and desire for new possibility, including ministry across cultural boundaries.

Rev. Ford, the pastor of the large church, admitted, "It's so much easier in a new church" (personal interview, 2013, July 1). **Rev. Ford** previously served as pastor of a different congregation, so he was able to make the observation and comparison. About his present church setting, **Rev. Ford** explained, "they have not been like 65 and older people who I knew in other counties. They haven't

been racist” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). The older church where he served had a significant number of congregants who were raised prior to the American integration emphasis. Those congregants were less likely to be open to a multi-cultural possibility. However, *in a new church setting and with younger congregants, the possibility for advancing multi-culturalism was much greater*. In fact, assuming **Rev. Ford’s** history with the older congregation, he was a bit surprised at the congregants’ openness to diversity, which was made visible through the presence of some couples with differing race identities. **Rev. Ford** recalled:

I didn’t have any grand designs on anything different. Sort of what I knew. But then the early sort of seeds for this, we had a couple of bi-racial couples . . . That was the only diversity we had. And it was a total non-issue at this church in 1999 . . . And I was like, “my gosh, either these people are too busy to worry about who someone else marries, or maybe they’re just Christians” . . . Because I’ve been in other congregations where it was an enormous issue if there was a bi-racial couple. So, that was really the kind of foundation for all of the multi-culturalism that’s happened since, is those bi-racial couples . . . And now we have many many many bi-racial couples . . . And, again, every time, people are either too busy or just plain Christian. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Rev. Ford was surprised by the “just plain Christian” response of the members of the relatively new church to married couples with differing race identities. **Rev. Ford** observes that in settings where the church is more established, multi-cultural ministry, in general, or being hospitable to couples with differing race identities, in specific, is an enormous issue and the people respond in ways that

contradict a Christian ethos. A multi-cultural “Christian” ethos is easier to nurture in a newer church from **Rev. Ford’s** perspective.

While the church where **Rev. Johnson** serves is much older than the church where **Rev. Ford** serves, **Rev. Johnson’s** experiences validate **Rev. Ford’s** observation about the correlation between newness and openness to multi-cultural ministry. The church where **Rev. Johnson** serves experienced newness as a result of resurrection after the death of what was old. **Rev. Johnson** explained, “Sometimes churches have to die in order for them to do that” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Mrs. Matthews**, a White woman congregant in the church where **Rev. Johnson** serves, further elaborated:

We had a great winnowing happen at [the church], which is when we lost so many of our members. And we got down, I think we could probably maybe fill a pew on Sunday morning . . . we were a nice little White Protestant Methodist Church, a little WASPy [White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism] church. Nobody was coming. We had nothing to offer that all the other dozens of WASP churches around had . . . but after the winnowing, then we were able, we had a mindset that if you walked in our doors, you were welcome. And that is [the church] today. So, that’s kind of how it happened. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Mrs. Matthews describes a different church that emerged after being winnowed. Before being winnowed, the church was like other churches that perpetuated the dominant U.S. White racial frame. After the winnowing, the new church that emerged had a welcoming mindset.

The multi-cultural setting in the churches where **Rev. Johnson** and **Rev. Ford** serve emerged through an atmosphere of newness. New churches have

not yet settled and are more readily shaped with a mindset that is open. Local churches with congregants that are more settled into a more segregated mindset may have to experience newness through the death of the old mindset to be a place where multi-cultural ministry can emerge.

II.A.2. Diverse congregation reflecting diverse communities. Both of the congregations in the study are physically located in areas where the surrounding community is diverse. The mid-size church is in a residential setting and the community immediately surrounding the large church is more commercial. When the majority of the congregants were White and *untied* from the surrounding community, both congregations made a decision to reflect the community and took intentional actions towards making that happen. **Rev. Johnson** reported, “there was diversity in the neighborhood as early as 1975” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). About the immediate community surrounding the church, **Mrs. Matthews** further described, “It was one-third Hispanic, one-third White, and one-third Black” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). The church where **Rev. Ford** serves had a practice of going to the homes of new neighbors and greeting them with information about the church. **Rev. Ford** recalled, “I kept noticing that the people who were answering the doors didn’t look like me. They either spoke Spanish or they were African American. And then there was a lot of whites too” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). Both congregations honestly assessed their surrounding communities and realized that the demographics of the congregations did not reflect the demographics of the community.

From the awareness that the composition of the congregation contradicted the composition of the community, the pastors and the congregations realized that change was necessary. **Rev. Ford** remembered, “And so I began to realize, ‘our church needs to reflect where we are’” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). About the community immediately surrounding the church, **Rev. Ford** observed, “you don’t need bussing anymore to achieve racial diversity in the schools. It’s there” and “And it has a great deal of natural diversity” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). **Rev. Ford** led the congregation in a cultural shift in regards to which the church was in relation to the surrounding community. The church where **Rev. Johnson** serves began opening up to the community prior to the beginning of his service as pastor. **Mrs. Matthews** was a member of the congregation when the shift occurred. About the realization about the composition of the community and the congregation’s response, **Mrs. Matthews** reflected, “That’s when the church as a whole said, ‘well, we need to open our doors’” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Each church made *an earnest commitment to being more reflective of the community’s natural racial diversity* as a result of their honest assessment.

Rev. Ford contributes the church’s effective movement towards reflecting the community to training with a missionary organization, hiring of African American and Latino staff members, and an influx of couples with differing race identities. **Rev. Johnson** also credits having a diverse staff to the effective shift in the congregation where he serves as pastor. He also acknowledges African American pioneers who broke the racial barrier in the church. In addition, **Rev.**

Johnson recognizes a shift in the use of church facilities and resources as a contributing factor in the church's effective move towards reflecting the community. The programming ministries of the church were no longer inwardly focused. **Rev. Johnson** informed:

So, what I did is I started doing some of those programmatic ministries, but I did them opened up to a community . . . So, we started an afterschool program, a food pantry, a clinic, a Wednesday evening meal, all of those things kind of generating lots of activity. We basically filled up the empty space in the church with activity that was basically community organized. Over time, a number of organizations either found their way into the church as their office space or that we created those entities. The Shalom project is a non-profit; the Institute for Dismantling Racism runs training; the Change Organization, which was the industrial area's community organizing group. So those, all of those ended up at [the church]. And pretty much, you know, we ran out of space. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

The church where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor began to reflect the community as it became a part of the community and belonged the community. Both churches' intentional efforts to reflect their communities led them into being effective in transgressing cultural boundaries.

When the two churches made intentional efforts to unite with and reflect the community, the churches were transformed into two of the very few United Methodist congregations in western North Carolina and of the relatively few congregations in America in which different racial groups gather to share space, time, resources, authority, stories, and experiences. About the worship attendance at the church where he serves as pastor, **Rev. Ford** indicated, "The

old slogan that 11:00 is the most segregated hour in America, that's not true. Not here" and:

1800 people includes folks from about 25 or 30 different countries, maybe more, [come to church] on a given Sunday morning. Plenty of Anglos, it's still a primarily majority Anglo congregation, a lot of African Americans, and, like I said, a lotta lot of internationals. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

From the congregation where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor, **Mr. Holmes**, an African American man (personal interview, 2013, July 28); **Mr. Hall**, an Indian man (personal interview, 2013, July 28); and **Ms. Nichols**, an African woman (personal interview, 2013, July 28) described mentoring programs and life groups where congregants gather in each others' homes. Worship services at the church where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor are very diverse, particularly in comparison to the vast majority of the other United Methodist congregations in western North Carolina.

Rev. Johnson and others from the church where he serves as pastor place more emphasis on diversity in the life of the church beyond Sunday. From the church where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor, **Mrs. Courts** detailed, "It's all kinds of people in [the church]. All kinds, and when I say that I mean of all ethnic groups, of all economic groups, whoever you are, and the thing is, whoever you are, come" (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Ms. Mason** added:

I think if you, if you come on Sunday mornings, you will see people who are, who qualify as clients for some of our outreach programs, such as the clothes closet, food pantry, um, the medical clinic—people who depend on

those services for food, for clothes. So, you would have, you would have that level. And I think you would also have, you'd see professionals, who probably have never, you know, had to choose between anything beyond Harris Teeter or Trader Joes. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Further, **Ms. Wilson** accounted, "It's sort of like a community center for people to feel safe" (personal interview, 2013, July 8) and:

I just feel like people in the community did have a respect for the church. And they have respect for what the church is trying to do. And, the other thing about volunteering is our, you know, that probably half of the people who volunteer are people who are receiving services. So, to me, what that says is, "I respect this so much that I'm going to give my time and my commitment, because I need the medical clinic or because I need the food pantry in order to get by within a month." So, I'm going to commit some time. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

The statements of **Mrs. Courts**, **Ms. Mason**, and **Ms. Wilson** describe mutual respect and service between the church and the community. The congregants participate in the community and the community participates in the church. The church and the community seem to be reconciled and united, which contributes to the church's effectiveness in transgressing cultural boundaries.

Ethos of personally inviting and welcoming. Both congregations displayed evidences of the pastor and congregants personally extending invitations to members of the community and of the general congregation receiving guests with exceptional hospitality once they arrived. "Bless this House" is a door-knocking ministry of the church where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor. The congregants identify and visit new members to the community. **Rev. Ford** described:

We send out teams of two to give people a “welcome to the church” and a refrigerator magnet that’s sort of the lynch pin of the visit: “Here we notice you’ve moved in, we’ve got a world famous refrigerator magnet for you.” (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Mr. Jamison, a member of the congregation, shared how he and other members of the congregation extend invitations. **Mr. Jamison** reported:

So I tell everybody about the church. I really do. “You go to church?” “Well no.” I go to this beautiful church that has all kinds of people . . . I think a lot of people do what I do and bring in different people that look like them or look different from them. I think that is kind of where it starts. (personal interview, 2013, July 28)

The congregants of the mid-size church have a similar ethos about highly regarding and inviting others into their church community. **Mrs. Matthews** expressed, “It’s just when you see somebody, invite ‘em to the church. I live in a multi-cultural neighborhood. And people come to me. I notice that they aren’t in church, I say, ‘I got a great church’” (personal interview, July 8, 2013). **Ms. Mason**, an African American neighbor to the mid-size church, illustrated the invitational nature of the church through her entry into the church community.

Ms. Mason narrated:

One of the children in the neighborhood here had been connected to [the church] through their afterschool program. And it became her church. And she was real excited about her church . . . And I was just impressed at how much a young person was excited about her church and she was a little white girl . . . And she wanted me to come to her church, you know. “Okay,” you know, like, “I gotta go.” This little white girl is excited about her church and she wants me to come. So, I’m a go check it out. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

These narratives demonstrate that the congregants have high regard for their church communities and are *excited about inviting others into their church culture, regardless of race, culture, or ethnic class*.

Once guests arrive at the churches, the excitement about the church community is evident through the welcome that the congregants extend to guests. One of the recurring themes about **Rev. Ford** which impressed guests who become congregants is that he remembers each guest's name (**Mr. Jamison**, personal interview, 2013, July 28; **Ms. Nichols**, personal interview, 2013, July 28). This church expresses welcome through providing tangible assistance to guests. **Ms. Nichols** said, "They are just God's people. They just want to help other people" (personal interview, 2013, July 28). **Mr. Hall** said, "If [the church] finds out [someone needs assistance], they help. They help no strings attached" (personal interview, 2013, July 28). **Mr. Wyatt** declared, "God has blessed through Good Sheppard ridiculous amount of times" (personal interview, 2013, July 28). These statements express welcoming through making personal and intimate connections with those when come to the church as guests.

Rev. Johnson condemns congregations who claim to be welcoming, but are inauthentic in their welcome. **Rev. Johnson** critiqued, "They'll welcome folks in. But as soon as the folks come in and want to gain some autonomy or do something within the church, then they shut it down" (personal interview, 2013, July 8). His critique suggests that welcome should *extend beyond the first visit*

into a sharing of more than space. **Rev. Johnson** promoted a radical sense of welcome that extends to persons regardless of race, economic class, or any other demarcation (personal interview, 2013 July 8). **Mrs. Courts**, a senior African American woman, shared how she encountered that radical sense of welcome when she visited the church for the first time. When she sat alone, a lady older than her approached her. **Mrs. Courts** narrated the exchange:

“Come sit with me.” And she was a White lady. In a way, that was unusual for what I was used to. I’m used to working with them, and whatever. But, all of the time I’ve been in a segregated, I grew up in a segregated church. So all of the time, I’ve been in segregated congregations. And that did something to me when she came over, instead of letting me sit there. She knew I was new. She didn’t know me. But she came over and said, “Come sit here.” And that was beside her. So, that said something to me. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

This radical welcome can transcend a long history of segregation. *Radical welcome can be a useful tool for intervening against irreconciliation.*

II.A.3. Sense of purpose and identity. While the two churches from where the interviewees were drawn have some significant common themes—e.g., a sense of newness, diverse congregations reflecting diverse community, an invitational and welcoming ethos, and effectively maintaining the tension between organically and intentionally managing diversity—they are very different. The size of the congregations is different. The ages and design of the church facilities are different. The surrounding communities are different. The theological and pragmatic emphases are different. The large church is emphatically and unapologetically evangelical. The mid-size church is

emphatically and unapologetically social justice oriented, particularly towards race, socio-economics, and gender eroticism. I will return to this distinction in *Chapter VI* for further analysis. However, for the immediate discussion, the congregations again share a common theme in that each congregation has a definite emphasis that shapes its purpose and identity. Having a distinctive emphasis that defines purpose and identity provides congregants with expectations of the pastor and their fellow congregants. Out of their emphases, each has made decisions that had the potential for disenfranchising members. Yet, their decisions based on their emphases have not yielded mass exoduses.

Rev. Johnson explained how the clear sense of identity and purpose developed at the church where he serves as pastor. **Rev. Johnson** shared:

I certainly was steeped in that [social justice] tradition. Although, I didn't ever think that the church had to be that, maybe just from my preaching and teaching, that's what happened. We've attracted folks with that label. And we've all claimed that sort of in the church. So, most people at [the church] would claim that. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Rev. Johnson has a clear perception of his purpose and identity, which translates to the church's purpose and identity. **Rev. Johnson's** and the church's purpose and identity attracted others with similar perspectives and likely repelled others who held opposing views. **Ms. Wilson** suggested, "Looking at these social justice pieces around race. And it's not just like everybody can come to this church" (personal interview, 2013, July 8). But those who do come readily recognize who the church is and what the church represents. So the

church is not defined by a particular ethnicity, but by purpose. As the church continued to focus, even amongst harsh external criticism, as **Mrs. Matthews** submitted, “We really grew stronger and more unified in our purpose. And that, sometimes, the whole end point of persecution is it does make you stronger and it does bring you together. And that’s exactly what happened here” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). The clear sense of purpose transcends cultural boundaries. Some African Americans, some White persons, and some Hispanic and Latinos/as have connected with the social justice identity that the pastor and the church projects.

While certainly different than **Rev. Johnson’s** emphasis, **Rev. Ford** has a clear sense of purpose and identity, which translates to the church. **Rev. Ford** proclaimed:

We do have ethnic diversity. *We do not have theological diversity . . . We are without reservation evangelical, Christ-centered, Scripture honoring . . . theology is really critical . . . That’s why our denomination drives me crazy. Because there’s this thought that if you have theological diversity that brings racial diversity. And the reverse is true . . . Pentecostals prove it to us again and again and again. So, I think as you lift up Jesus, and offer calls for salvation, conversion, holiness, all that, everything else just flows . . . Diversity is not the goal, it’s the result. The goal is salvation, the God honoring, centering community. A result of that goal is diversity . . . It’s a gift of the Holy Spirit.* (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

Rev. Ford’s unapologetic and emphatic identity and purpose has likely repelled those who are less evangelically oriented, a consequence which **Rev. Ford** readily accepts. At the same time, **Rev. Ford’s** evangelical emphasis attracts others with similar perspective across cultural boundaries. With pride, Indian

American **Mr. Hall** asserted, “[**Rev. Ford**] spends time in researching the bible and appropriately applicable to the people of the culture and the community and he brings those subjects” (personal interview, 2013, July 28). African American **Mr. Lloyd** added, “To me it didn’t matter. Black, white, green, purple, it didn’t matter to me. As long as they were preaching from the word of God and I was being fed and that my kids were allowed to fellowship with everyone” (personal interview, 2013, July 28). When searching for a church, **Ms. Nichols**, an African woman desired to “find a church closer (as close) to home as I could attend; and also a church that I could fit in to, meaning diversity wise; and also the church that preaches the Word” (personal interview, 2013, July 28). Again, the *clear sense of purpose and identity* that the pastor and church projects transcend cultural boundaries.

II.B. Complexities and Ambiguities: Managing Tensions

II.B.1. Evangelical and/or social justice. The congregations of the persons interviewed share themes which contribute to them being more effective than other United Methodist churches in western North Carolina at transgressing cultural boundaries. However, there are some significant distinctions between these congregations. One of these distinctions is the perception of their role in the denomination and in the larger culture, which appear to be related to the one’s conservative evangelical orientation and the other’s liberal social justice orientation.

Rev. Ford perceived that his role and the role of his church did not include transforming the denomination or society. The church is extensively engaged in outreach ministry in the local community and abroad. However, the intent of the outreach is not to change the culture. **Rev. Ford** declared, “We are really, our focus is really not at all on social transformation. We’re on, we’re about building a prevailing congregation” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). The initial recruitment letter expressed an interest in providing “an approach that will contribute to a United Methodist Church that is alive and engaged in social transformation, particularly concerning race relations” (see Appendix D). **Rev. Ford** responded:

We just don’t have this driving goal that we’re here for the transformation of the society. We’re here for the advancement of the kingdom. And, as the kingdom gets advanced, whatever else happens happens . . . It’s just different . . . I just noticed your language. And we just don’t ever talk that way. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

From **Rev. Ford’s** perspective, the church where he serves, which transgresses cultural boundaries effectively internally, does not aim for the denomination or society to respond.

In contrast, **Rev. Johnson** intends for the congregation where he serves as pastor to have an impact on the denomination and society. Like Deotis J. Roberts, **Rev. Johnson** perceives a direct connection between transgressing cultural boundaries and liberation. **Rev. Johnson** insisted, “If you’re going to do [multi-cultural ministry], you’re going to have to connect to the liberation of the

African American church” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Rev. Johnson** expects the internal liberation work at the church where he serves to have an external impact. **Rev. Johnson** recognized, “So, there’s a, there’s a lot of activism in the congregation” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). These aspirations and efforts extend beyond race into other areas of advocacy for **Rev. Johnson**. **Rev. Johnson** mused, “I’ve never figured out a way for [the church] to have an impact on the Methodist system at large. But this [LGBT advocacy] feels like the way to do that” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Black woman congregant, **Ms. Wilson**, confirmed the pastor’s aspirations, sharing, “Like, it’s not just, like, ‘oh, everybody come, Kumbaya.’ It’s, ‘everybody come, and we do still know that we need to be moving in a particular direction to think about issues of social justice’” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Ms. Wilson** and **Rev. Johnson** expect their congregation to move toward their perception of a just congregation and for their congregation to contribute to social transformation of United Methodism and of society. As these two congregations illustrate, effective ministry across cultural boundaries can occur regardless of the desired impact on others outside of the church.

II.B.2. Organic and/or intentional approaches. One of the challenges of sustaining a sense of excitement in invitation and welcome that transcends cultural boundaries is *holding in tension the sense of allowing diversity to happen naturally verses intentionally targeting persons from other cultures to become a part of a congregation*. The interviewees from these diverse congregations

suggest that these congregations effectively manage that tension. These congregations have participated in trainings and made adjustments concerning music, staff, and leadership. **Rev. Ford** observed, “Diversity is a gift of the Holy Spirit . . . Ephesians 2, Colossians 3. You, I can’t conjure it up. I can’t create it” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). On the other hand, **Rev. Ford** reported, “Starting about 2003, we got real strategic with going more diverse on purpose,” “the fact is if guests come and I notice that they’re not White, they do get a little extra TLC from me,” and “ I know it’s not gonna happen accidentally. So, I’ve gotta be a little bit more intentional with it. And so that sort of helped us all get where we are” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). Congregants from the church where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor expressed similar sentiments. **Ms.**

Wilson proclaimed:

I think it has to be some purpose. Like, the, you really have to know that it’s one of your goals. But I also think that you can’t just specifically go out and say, “Oh, come to our church; ‘cause you’re that . . . come to our church, ‘cause you’re this.” I think there has to be purpose but there has to be spontaneity. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Likewise, **Mrs. Matthews** offered:

We don’t target. We just open the doors. You know. It’s really different than what people see from the outside. I think they see us as targeting. We’ve never done that. Ever. We said, “If you’re here, you’re welcome. We love you. And if we get to know you, we’ll love you even more.” And that’s kind of what we do. That’s what I see. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

“Targeting” is not the best way to describe what these churches do to be diverse congregations. However, the congregants realize that extending extra “TLC” to those who are not of the dominant culture is not unethical.

II.B.3. Transgressing cultural boundaries. There are levels of discomfort that accompany transgressing cultural boundaries. Sacrifices have to be made for those of a culture who are less represented in order to enter into the space of another dominant culture. Also sacrifices have to be made for the dominant culture to accommodate those of another culture who have come to share space. *The tension between levels of sacrifice has to be continually managed for the substantive sharing to continue.* The interviewees reveal that the both congregations have effectively managed this tension through leadership, music, and discourse. However, there is a distinction. At the church where **Rev. Ford** serves, the cultures that are less represented seem to make greater sacrifices to share space, while at the church where **Rev. Johnson** serves, the dominant culture sacrifices greatly to share space.

Both congregations have diverse staff and leadership teams. The program and pastor staff at the church where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor has 8-10 staff persons, including an African American male as Pastor of Mission and Community Impact and a Latino pastor as Pastor of Latino Ministry. The church also has a 12-member board of directors, which consists of African Americans and Anglos (**Rev. Ford**, personal interview, 2013, July 1). **Rev. Johnson** expressed a high regard for having diversity in leadership. **Rev. Johnson**

argued that the church, “should honor the cultures that people come out of and they should move those cultures to the pulpit and emphasize that for folks, have that sense of shared leadership, that’s really really important” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Rev. Johnson** reported that the congregation has consistently maintained diversity on staff. However, the congregation faces challenges in maintaining diversity in volunteer leadership. The constituency of the church is generally of the lower socio-economic class, has less formal education, and does not have the administrative qualities required for leadership. **Rev. Johnson** informed, “I asked them to be lay leader, leadership council chair, head of the trustees. Sometimes that worked, sometimes it didn’t” (personal interview, 2013, July 8) **Rev. Johnson** further informed, “Many of them were not ready to take on leadership positions to run committees. But they brought other gifts” (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Rev. Johnson’s** awareness of the challenges and quest to find other ways to address the “really really important” task of diversity in leadership is essential for transgressing cultural boundaries. Both **Rev. Johnson’s** and **Rev. Ford’s** efforts represent the dominant culture’s willingness to sacrifice to accommodate other cultures in shared space.

As noted in *Chapter II*, music in the Black church has some distinctive qualities. Music in the Black church has a unique sound (McClain, 1990), different theological emphases (McClain, 1990), and uses tones and chords that are distinctive to Black music (McClain, 1990). Both **Rev. Ford** and **Rev. Johnson** recognize these differences. In an exchange with African American

congregant **Mr. Jamison**, **Rev. Ford** asked **Mr. Jamison** why he attended the 10:00 AM worship service as opposed to the 11:30 AM service, notifying **Mr. Jamison** that the 10:00 AM worship service was the “Whitest service” (**Mr. Jamison**, personal interview, 2013, July 28). During an interview with African American congregant **Mr. Lloyd**, his African American wife, **Mrs. Lloyd**, and another African American woman, **Ms. Martin**, chimed in about the music at their church. **Mr. Lloyd**, **Mrs. Lloyd**, and **Ms. Martin** discussed:

Mr. Lloyd: I love the worship but what the songs and some of the songs that are sang, or whatever the situation it is . . . Not my style of music.

Eve: He wants more Gospel

Ms. Martin: Okay, do you not know that if you would become part of the system and take ownership then you would grow in decision-making in that?

Mr. Lloyd: Honestly?

Ms. Martin: We’re missing that. We are missing that.

Mr. Lloyd: Honestly, do I?

Ms. Martin: We need that! I need somebody.

Mr. Lloyd: Okay, okay. [*laughter*] Well, honestly, that is the thing that has been missing. Because I prayed about it, and I mean I prayed big time about it. Because, I was like Lord I don’t want to put myself in a situation that there is a certain type of music or a certain type of sound that I want to hear to be a part of fellowship or part of worship. (personal interview, 2013, July 28)

African Americans **Mr. Lloyd**, **Mrs. Lloyd**, and **Ms. Martin** sacrifice their music preferences in order share worship experiences with the congregation, which

primarily presents music that caters to White congregants' sensibilities. **Ms. Martin** suggested that she, **Mrs. Lloyd**, and **Mr. Lloyd** are not the only African Americans whose worship experience would be enhanced by having music that appeals to their sensibilities included in the worship experiences. **Ms. Martin** encouraged **Mr. Lloyd** to intervene. **Mr. Lloyd** admitted that he has not previously intervened because he did not want to presumably represent others in the congregation, but pledged to reconsider based on **Ms. Martin's** encouragement.

Certainly, **Ms. Martin**, **Mrs. Lloyd**, and **Mr. Lloyd** do not represent the entire Black population of the congregation. But their conversation does reflect a perceived dissonance between the Black worship experience and the worship experience in their congregation. However, the distance was not too much to overcome for them not to share the other aspects that the congregation had to offer. But those African Americans sacrifice their music experience to transgress boundaries into the predominantly White worship setting.

In contrast, the congregation where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor attempts to accommodate musical traditions of other cultures represented. **Rev. Johnson** submitted, "We don't do a lot of high church hymns. I love high church hymns, I come from a high church tradition. But it's not where folks are with the church" (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Further, **Rev. Johnson** declared:

We do music that, some of the music is a lot, kind of traditional African American music, like Spirituals. We tend to sing more, I call them revival tunes, like "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior" and, "I Love to Tell the Story,"

some of those songs that seem kind of, they cross a lot of cultures. And, we give them more of a gospel jazz feel to it. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

In the congregation where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor, the dominant culture attempts to sacrifice to transgress cultural boundaries.

The way persons communicate provides another boundary between cultures. **Ms. Martin** recognized a higher reverence for God and for the pastor in Black congregations than in her congregation. **Ms. Martin** disclosed:

There is a casualness that I had to get used to. Even towards, there is a casualness toward God. Not in a bad way, because I think it mirrors more so in the relationship more so in the African American community in the relationship congregants have with their pastor versus the relationship that congregants have with their pastor in more White churches. (personal interview, 2013, July 28)

So, **Ms. Martin** was willing to sacrifice the reverent communication style of the Black church, which was not too much to sacrifice for her to share space at her church. She also shared how certain events can raise tension among the racial groups in the congregation. From her perspective, it seems the congregation has not yet established an effective means to process racially tense subjects.

Ms. Martin informed:

But what you don't escape in a multicultural church is you still have people who are racist on both sides. I'm still; I think I can be racist in many ways. So you don't escape. But I almost like it, because when something happens, when a Trayvon Martin thing happens, you know, actually, you know what, I could possibly take someone to the side and possible say to them "let's talk about it." But there is that little friction sometimes. I know my brothers and sisters in Christ. They love me. But I also know that

we're still different and we're still imperfect and we're still working this thing out here on earth. It is just that we're doing it now at [the church]. So you know there are still areas that probably could use work. (personal interview, 2013, July 28)

While some may question **Ms. Martin's** ability to be a racist based on a required power dynamic that she does not likely possess based on her race identity, her point is that the way the congregation addresses racially tense conversation could use work.

The church where **Rev. Johnson** serves as pastor seems to be more direct in addressing racial tension. In fact, **Rev. Johnson** argued, "Anybody that wants to be multi-cultural in ministry and not talk about racism should get out of the business" (personal interview, 2013, July 8). **Rev. Johnson** continued:

I think you have to address the systemic issues . . . Otherwise, I don't think that there is, I don't think the relationships that people have, even cross-culturally, are authentic, unless people can talk about their differences, talk about power differences, talk about money. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

African American congregants **Ms. Wilson** and **Ms. Mason** appreciate the direct manner in which the church addresses race issues. **Ms. Mason** submitted:

And so, you have to keep having those conversations. And so, if a church is serious about wanting to be diverse in any way, you have to talk about what's unique. There has to be real relationships with people, where people will say, "Well, these are issues that I have and I feel like I have these issues because . . ." And they need to be able to hear that . . . They can't say, "oh well." You know, you can't brush off people's experiences, I guess. You have to trust people, trust that people are experts on their own experiences, and allow them to vent it, express it, and really receive it. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Along with **Ms. Mason's** expressed appreciation for being received as an expert of her experiences, **Ms. Wilson** appreciates that the congregation has established an organization, the Institute for Dismantling Racism, to lead the church and the community in healthy dialogue about racially charged issues.

Ms. Wilson reasoned:

Because I think, even with the Institute for Dismantling Racism, they want you to go through a training before you try to come in and look at racism and the church. You know, it's sort of like we want people to have a background in it before it's just all personal, you know. So, that you can understand why African Americans feel like this, and why Latinos and why White people feel like this. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Ms. Wilson further expressed appreciation for **Rev. Johnson's** courage and willingness to confront issues of race and racism. **Ms. Wilson** declared:

Because, as an African American at [the church], one of the reasons that makes me feel comfortable is that I know that I have a minister who is not scared to, and I think that there are people that thinks he talks about it possibly too much, but will open up the conversation about White privilege in a sermon often, you know, all the time. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Rev. Johnson, Ms. Wilson, and Ms. Mason expressed their gratitude in the way that the church sacrifices the comfort of the dominant White culture to accommodate communication with other cultural representatives who have transgressed cultural boundaries to share space with them. At least one cultural group is going to sacrifice comfort to share space with persons from other cultures. As those who are engaged or considering transgressing cultural

boundaries, they must consider how much of this sacrifice can be shared and how it can be shared. The churches represented by the interviewees demonstrate an ability to manage the sharing of sacrifice without a mass exodus of either cultural group.

Conclusion

What are we doing with Black people? *As cultures collide, the representatives from each culture import their preferences and experiences, including preaching styles, music, length of service, theological emphases, expressions of reverence, language, and histories in the midst of an American dominant cultural frame that promotes White superiority and Black inferiority.*

These collisions can be chaotic and overwhelming. The vast majority of American congregations, included United Methodist congregations, have succumbed to the “comfort” of being *untied* (see Footnote 1, page 1), *irreconciled* and segregated. However, some United Methodists in western North Carolina are incarnational about ministry across cultural boundaries. The narratives of the 18 interviewees from the churches engaged in transgressing cultural boundaries and from 3 pastors serving congregations with majority cultures different from theirs intersecting with themes from Wesleyan theology and Black church interpretive traditions provide substance for The United Methodist Church to consider for social transformation through racial reconciliation.

How should The United Methodist Church respond? Emerson and Smith (2000) inform, “the connection between the two [religion and race] especially

religion's role in the racially divided United States, is grossly understudied" (p. 2). That the dominant composition of United Methodist local churches is in conflict with the central message of The United Methodist Church calls for immediate and extensive critique. Should The United Methodist Church continue to publish and promote the ethnic divides represented in the local churches? Does having predominantly segregated local churches bother The United Methodist Church collectively? Should The United Methodist Church assume the posture of the dominant culture even though race relations in the dominant culture are antithetical to the central message of The United Methodist Church? Should The United Methodist Church take cues from other entities in society that have developed strategies to address segregation?

For the task of responding justly to racial *irreconciliation*, Wesleyan Theology offers standards of Wesley's general rules, a commitment to social justice, and a profound understanding of God's grace. Further, Methodism has historically embodied a movement ethos and practiced holy conversation. To compliment Wesleyan theology, as representatives of the lesser represented culture in The United Methodist Church, Black liberation and reconciliation theology demands repentance and forgiveness among the estranged cultural representatives, agency and autonomy for all cultural representatives, and unrestrictive sanctuary for all cultural representatives. The interviewees from the Methodists engaged in ministry across racial boundaries with a measure of effectiveness offered some pragmatic tools for consideration:

- Through faith and persistence, celebrate differences where appropriate, embrace similarities, and maintain a sense of calling and dignity;
- Through holy conversation, intentionally maintain the shared space as sacred and safe space where all of God's people can enjoy God's presence and the fellowship of God's people unencumbered;
- Be invitational and welcoming to everyone, regardless of race identity. Extending an invitation and warmly receiving everyone has great potential to result in a diverse congregation;
- Be community oriented. A church should be a part of and a reflection of its surrounding community's ethnic and class composition. Local churches in neighborhoods which are segregated have additional obstacles to overcome. However, local churches in diverse communities should reflect the composition of their neighbors;
- Have a sense of purpose and identity. If what the local church stands for is clear and ethnically neutral, representatives from diverse cultures may connect;
- Maintain an aura of newness. Some of the local churches that were formed according to the Homogeneous Unit Principle and/or segregated residential patterns may be resistant to a cultural shift. An atmosphere that promotes innovation and creativity can cultivate diversity;
- Manage the tension between being evangelical and being social justice oriented. As the gospel transforms the lives of persons, the persons change the lives of other persons and can affect the surrounding culture. If a congregation is effective at reflecting diversity, it may cause its neighborhood, denomination, and/or larger society to deal with racially charged conditions;
- Manage the tension between being intentional and being organic about diversity. In the racially charged U.S. culture, diversity is unlikely to just happen. Deliberate action must take place for diversity to occur. Nevertheless, the efforts exerted towards being diverse should not be overly forced to produce an atmosphere of pretense; and
- Be mindful about the levels of sacrifice that each cultural group makes in order to accommodate other cultural groups. Sharing space, time, financial resources, personnel, language, stories, traditions, authority, interpretive frameworks, and experiences requires sacrifice from both groups. The challenge for sustainability is to not require either group to sacrifice so much that they consider what is surrendered to be greater than what is gained in the shared space.

One of the interviewees, **Rev. Ford**, summarizes a responsible manner for diverse cultures to share space—being “just plain Christian” (personal interview, 2013, July 1). Through faithfully attending to these standards, demands, and tools, The United Methodist Church can have a profound effect on its culture and the larger society and indeed “transform the world” (Alexander, 2012, p. 91).

CHAPTER VI

PART TWO—CLASS, GENDER, AND ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

*When we asunder part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.
—John Fawcett, 1782*

What Shall Be Done With Others of Us?

A theology of reconciliation regarding Black/White race relations has implications on other areas of social estrangement in the church and U.S. society, including socioeconomic *irreconciliation*, gender eroticism *irreconciliation*, and *irreconciliation* with ethnicities other than Black or White. A theology of race reconciliation has the potential to provide a framework for other areas of reconciliation in the church and society. In *Chapter VI*, I evaluate potential application of the theology of reconciliation constructed in the first four chapters of this dissertation towards socioeconomic class relations in Part I of this chapter, relations related to gender eroticism in Part II of this chapter, and relations with ethnic groups other than Black or White in Part III of this chapter. Certainly, each of these categories deserves much more comprehensive analysis than what will be provided in this chapter. However, drawing from the interviews of those who practice ministry across cultural boundaries and from literature contributing to discourse concerning the intersection of Wesleyan theology and

Black church interpretive traditions, I focus on how philosophies, doctrines, and pedagogy of Wesleyan theology and Black church interpretive traditions apply to socioeconomic class segregation, gender eroticism segregation, and segregation among ethnic persons and churches other than Blacks and Whites. I evaluate the implications of Wesleyan Theology's (a) general rules, (b) social justice, and (c) grace intersecting with Black liberation and reconciliation theology's requirements of (a) repentance and forgiveness, (b) agency and autonomy, and (c) unrestrictive sanctuary being applied to other areas of social estrangement in the church and society. For each social estrangement category, I respond to the questions: What have we done? What are we doing? Why shall we do anything? and What shall we do? *Chapter VI* also offers strategies designed to address the possibilities for social transformation through socioeconomic class, gender eroticism, and/or multi-ethnic reconciliation.

Part I. Those Who Are Impoverished¹⁰

I.A. What Has Been Done with Those Who Are Impoverished?

Methodists were present during the colonial period of the United States, which contributed to its formation. Being present then and in the 21st Century reflects the resilience of Methodism. However, United Methodists have not responded well to shifts in technology, politics, or economics that have occurred in the U.S. over the centuries. *Those who have embraced Methodism during its formation were of the lower and middle economic classes.* These middle- and

¹⁰ I use the phrase "those who are impoverished" as opposed to "the poor" and "the impoverished" in an attempt to not ascribe identity based on access to resources.

lower-class persons pooled resources to establish churches, hospitals, schools, colleges, and universities (Weems, 2012, p. 90). More recently, according to Weems (2012), “United Methodism has taken on an increasingly upper-middle-class character” (p. 83). Unfortunately, upper-middle-class postmodern Methodists have been unable to achieve the level of social transformation that their modern or pre-modern forebears did with fewer resources.

Max Weber (2008) describes the spirit of capitalism that dominated the economic development of the New World and was embraced by Protestants as an ethic driven by earning money as the ultimate purpose of life. According to Marquadt (1992), followers of Wesley embraced this ethic with an addendum. Wesley’s socio-ethical theory instructed capitalists to “Earn all you can” and “Save all you can.” What distinguished Wesley’s socio-ethical theory from the spirit of capitalism was a third directive: “Give all you can.” Wesley concluded that following the first two directives without the third was evil (Marquadt, 1992, p. 35). Wesley’s socio-ethical theory provides a framework through which adherents could participate responsibly within a capitalist system without relinquishing too much power to the system or to those who excel within the system.

United Methodists have largely departed from the Wesleyan socio-ethical principles. Many Methodists, who began as economically lower- or middle-class citizens, followed the first two directives of Wesley’s socio-ethical theory without regard to the third and enjoyed economic success and upward economic mobility

(Sutton, 2001). Sutton (2001) further observes that from this setting, a highly centralized and increasingly powerful Methodist bureaucracy emerged. As the general Methodist population relinquished governing responsibility to the bureaucracy, they assumed *consumerists' postures*. Rendle (2011) encourages United Methodists to reject consumerist sensibilities and embrace citizenship. He explains:

Consuming is the posture of dependence, counting on the institution to protect and preserve what we do, what we individually believe, and where our greatest passions lie . . . Citizenship in the new Wesleyan movement . . . is to commit to deep change that will change who we are, where we will fit into the organizational life of the denomination, where resources will be directed, and how decisions will be made. (pp. 55–56)

As consumers, United Methodists have *outsourced their theological task concerning those who are impoverished* to professional clergy (Rendle, 2011, p. 32), denominational entities, and/or para-church organizations.

Like the U.S. White racial social frame presented by Feagin (2010), those who are privileged advance a socio-economic class social frame, which promotes the superiority of those who are affluent and the inferiority of those who are oppressed. Powell (1997) declares, “Poverty has its own rules and its own world” (p. 163). Those who are impoverished appear to have established anti-oppression counter-frames and home-culture frames (Feagin, 2010) so that they may have unrestrictive sanctuary similar to the invisible church that African Americans constructed.

Methodists have departed from their heritage of being among and being with those who are impoverished. Consumerist Methodists direct resources to others to make decisions on their behalf, which protects them from direct contact with the lower-class and allows them to maintain upper-class social frames without guilt haunting them. Through outsourcing ministry to and with those who are impoverished, consuming Methodists, particularly in local church settings, cannot understand the rules of poverty and will not be able to share worlds with those who are impoverished.

I.B. What Is Being Done with Those Who Are Impoverished?

In *Poor People*, Vollmann (2007) invites readers to participate in an awkward stare at persons who are impoverished, whose lives he displays, which consumerist Methodists have historically ignored. Vollmann (2007) offers rationale for disregarding poverty, “The dead are gone, invisible to us, but that’s because we bury them in the ground where we won’t have to smell them. – Why is an opened grave a fearful thing? For the same reason that visible poverty is” (p. 124). *Consumerist Methodists have essentially buried poverty to shield them from the smell.* **Rev. Barrett** illustrates how the local congregation where she serves reflects estrangement from the poor. She described the congregation as having a “silver spoon” and that “getting out in the community is difficult for them” (personal interview, 2013, August 7). The church where she serves conducted a survey which asked congregants “with whom did you want to worship?” Consistent with the Homogeneous Unit Principle espoused by Wagner (1979),

the responses overwhelmingly revealed “we want to worship with family and friends,” reflecting a desire to be united with those who share race and socio-economic class identities and a lack of desire to be united with those who do not.

Rev. Barrett inferred:

If people can’t see that the people that you want to worship with is your family and friends and not the least of these, not those who don’t know Christ, not those who are struggling with issues, then we have the problem, not them. (personal interview, 2013, August 7)

A lack of desire to worship with those who are “least of these” (Matthew 25) is a problem, along with not having poverty-related issues as a priority. Of the 59 United Methodist annual conference (see Footnote 2, page 4) and of the 51 United Methodist approved seminaries and theological schools, only the Red Bird Missionary Conference in Kentucky (2012) mentions addressing poverty or economic needs in their statement of priorities.

Certainly, some United Methodists are in meaningful relationships with those who are impoverished and understand the rules and world of poverty.

Rev. Johnson serves a congregation who esteems poverty-related issues as central. According to **Rev. Johnson**, socio-economic diversity represents the largest form of diversity in the congregation where he serves (personal interview, 2013, July 8). Those who are recipients of the congregation’s extensions of benevolence—clothing closets, Narcotics Anonymous, and community meals—have become a part of the congregation. Likely more of an exception

than the rule, this congregation provides a model for ministry that effectively transgresses socio-economic boundaries.

I.C. Why Shall Anything Be Done with Those Who Are Impoverished?

The Protestant Christian canon is consistent concerning relief for those who are impoverished. **Rev. Johnson** shares part of what he does that improves the effectiveness of his congregation towards reconciliation with those who are impoverished. **Rev. Johnson** indicated:

I'd say that my preaching probably, if the phrase that I use the most about that, is the, you know, is about poverty. So, I emphasize the Scriptures welcome of people who are poor . . . God's option for the poor from liberation theology, I talk about that a lot. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Following the model embodied by Jesus, the Church (see Footnote 4, page 12) has a directive to *restore, liberate, and reconcile* those who were impoverished, captive, and/or oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus was born into a family who was impoverished. In Jesus's culture, when a mother presented a newly born child to the priests, the preferred offering was a lamb and a turtledove (Leviticus 12:6). For those who were unable to present the preferred offering, two turtledoves were acceptable (Leviticus 12:8), which Mary presented after Jesus's birth (Luke 2:24). Jesus identified himself among the lower social classes, affirms those who extend direct personal relief to those of the lower social classes, and condemns those who disregard those of the lower social classes (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus did not assign value based on monetary wealth.

The narrative of a rich man and Lazarus, who was impoverished, illustrates Jesus's assignment of equal value among those who belonged to opposing socio-economic classes. In contrast to the man who was affluent, who was lavishly dressed, and spent money daily without reservation, Lazarus was a beggar who did not have the resources to care for his poor medical condition. Both men died. The rich man was buried. Lazarus was carried by angels into the Bosom of Abraham. The man, who was rich and non-responsive to Lazarus in life, became a beggar in death (Luke 16:19–31). Jesus illustrates the disparity and disunity among those who were affluent and those who were impoverished in this life and challenges those who are privileged to actively respond before it is too late. Jesus embodied reconciliation with those who are impoverished.

John Wesley and his contemporaries also provided a framework of reconciliation across socio-economic boundaries. Wesley initiated several practices to extend benevolences to those who were less privileged. Wesley administered a lending stock that provided short-term small-business loans (Heitzenrater, 1995), a medical dispensary for persons with chronic illnesses (Heitzenrater, 1995), and “The Poorhouse,” which provided housing for older widows (Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 167). Further, Wesley did not outsource these efforts to other persons or institutions, but personally visited with and ate with persons who were impoverished (Heitzenrater, 1995). Like Jesus, Wesley embodied reconciliation with those who were impoverished.

Denominationally, in theory, The United Methodist Church advocates for active responses towards poverty. The *Book of Discipline* (2012) declares:

In spite of general affluence in the industrialized nations, the majority of persons in the world live in poverty . . . As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich . . . we emphasize measures that build and maintain the wealth of poor people. (Alexander, 2012, pp. 130–131)

and that, “God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the market place. And so shall we” (Alexander, 2012, p. 142). While, in writing and in theory, these statements reflect an admiral commitment to those who are impoverished. Yet in reality, most United Methodists can be closely identified with the rich man of Luke 16. Sanders (1997) adds:

Yet in reality the same churches who address their liberation rhetoric in the form of statements, resolutions, protests, pickets and boycotts have failed to engage the poor directly and have little to offer with respect to the practical task of reforming communities. (p. 148)

The Confession of the United Methodist communion litany admits, “We confess . . . we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy” (Young, 1989, p. 12). Consumerist United Methodists can partake of communion and pronounce the confession without pretense as they have likely disregarded opportunities to extend benevolence to their neighbors who are impoverished since the last time they partook.

Ms. Mason personalized the difference a church's benevolence can make in the lives of those who are impoverished. Her mother had a health issue that could have been improved with medication, which she could not afford. Without the medication that she needed, her condition worsened to where she could no longer work. **Ms. Mason** grieved:

And so, when I think about possible economic impacts, if there had been a church where she could have gotten some help, a place where she could have gotten some help with her medicine, she could still be working, you know, as opposed to completely dependent on the state for everything. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Powell (1997) reckons:

In the most profound sense, being able to say to one another "There's one of ours!" whatever our color or our socioeconomic class, is a tremendous testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to bring us together in Christ's body, the church. (p. 164)

United Methodists, in particular, and all Christians, in general, have the Scriptural, traditional, experiential, and reasonable mandate to reconcile with those who are impoverished.

I.D. What Shall Be Done with Those Who Are Impoverished?

Ms. Wilson provided a glimpse of those who are impoverished and those who are privileged sharing hearts, hands, space, time, financial resources, personnel, language, stories, traditions, authority, interpretive frameworks, and experiences. The church where **Ms. Wilson** attends hosts a weekly open community meal. **Ms. Wilson** narrated:

I was sitting at the table with two people. And I didn't know that they were homeless. But you could sort of gather from the conversation. And one of the guys said to the little boy who was walking around, he said, "I just want to tell you, you are such a nice young man." And he told him he was the nicest young man and to keep up his good work. And he said, "And you can tell your parents that the man who lives under the bridge told you that" . . . So, it's like, it was, that night, I don't know, for some reason, that night and that conversation and this homeless man being able to tell this little middle class boy that he was so proud of him and to keep up the good work was just inspiring to me. Because, I think that, you know, you can live in your communities and not have contact with people . . . I may see people, but I, like, just to be able to have conversation. And then there was a woman. And she was challenging [the pastor] about some philosophical stuff. And she's homeless. But it just gives you a sense of humanity for all people. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Those who are privileged and those who are impoverished have a regularly scheduled meal together in this congregation. Those who are privileged do not just serve those who are impoverished, but, like Jesus and like Wesley, they sit, eat, and have conversation with one another. Those who are impoverished have substantive perceptions to contribute to the conversation that may transform the rules and world those who are privileged. Those who are impoverished and those who are privileged can gain a sense of humanity for all people through holy conversation.

Returning to Christian and Methodist theological and traditional heritage, *by God's grace* and with concern for social justice, United Methodists should provide unrestrictive sanctuary for and share unrestrictive sanctuary with those who are impoverished where holy conversation can occur. *United Methodists should repent and request forgiveness* for "not hearing the cry of the needy" (Young, 1989, p. 12), resisting the consumerist tendency to outsource (Rendle,

2011) holy conversations and sincerely acknowledge the presence, the plight, the rules, and the world of those who are impoverished. Through holy conversation, those who are privileged can understand the rules and the world of poverty (Powell, 1997) and extend benevolence towards doing no harm, doing good, and attending to the ordinances of God (Alexander, 2012) regarding neighbors who are impoverished. While honoring the rules and world of poverty, those who are privileged can intervene without insult for a more just and secure dominant socio-economic frame. **Rev. Douglas** emphasized that he learned through holy conversation with those who are impoverished, “The difference between ministry to and ministry with people.” In attempt to intervene with those who are impoverished, **Rev. Douglas** shared:

So, I have been, over the last year, year and a half, trying to speak to the fact that we need to get out of here and be with people who are in different situations, not just raise money to send to somewhere. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Assuming those who are privileged have sincerely repented, are willing to adapt the rules and world of privilege, and will be intentional about extending agency, autonomy, and authority to those who are impoverished, by the grace of God, those who are impoverished may be more willing and able to forgive and reconcile with those who are privileged, *adapt the rules and world of poverty, and embrace the newly constructed rules and world of those who are reconciled across socio-economic boundaries.*

Part II. Same-Gender Eroticism

II.A. What Has Been Done with Same-Gender Eroticism?

Before 1969, the general attitude towards same-gender eroticism (see Footnote 8, page 120) was *cultural silence*. Lesbian and gay advocates Anita C. Hill and Leo Treadway (1998) inform:

A conspiracy of silence about lesbians and gay men has set the tone for an inadequate or absent sociopolitical response to the needs of these individuals in church and society. Misinformation fills the void left by silence and perpetuates myths and stereotypes. (p. 240)

In the midst of *cultural silence, misinformation, myths, and stereotypes*, those who had same-gender erotic predispositions were culturally alienated and oppressed, but did not have a resistive community similar to the Black church. In 1969, New York City police raided the *Stonewall Inn* where those with same-gender erotic predispositions frequently socialized. The raid was followed by a nationally publicized three-day riot, which unified and empowered a same-gender erotic predisposition community (Kirk, 2009). The American culture has recently shifted towards being more favorable to the community of those who have same-gender erotic dispositions. According to Kinnaman and Lyons (2007):

A new generation of adults has significantly shifted its view and now accepts homosexuality as a legitimate way of life. While the general population has been slowly edging toward greater acceptance of gays and lesbians over the last twenty years, those under the age of twenty-six are more likely to accept it without consideration. In the 1980s differences of opinion on this topic were rare across age groups, but since then there has been a widening gap between the views of young and older adults. (pp. 99–100)

While the general American population is increasingly more accepting of those who have same-gender erotic predispositions, the institutional church, in general, including The United Methodist Church *may reasonably be perceived as maintaining a less favorable stance against the community of those who have same-gender erotic predispositions.*

Since the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968, issues related to homosexuality, gay and lesbian relationships, or same-gender eroticism, have been a recurring topic of discussion during General Conference (see Footnote 7 page 103) which is the governing body of The United Methodist Church that gathers every four years “to set policy, approve legislation, and issue pronouncements on behalf of the entire connection” (Frank, 2002, p. 255). W. Astor Kirk (2009), an African American United Methodist scholar, provides a timeline of the actions taken by General Conferences in relation to persons with same-gender erotic predispositions:

- 1972—Adopted normative statement declaring that “the practice of homosexuality [is considered] incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- 1976—Adopted policy of prohibiting “funding” of UMC groups supporting persons with same-gender erotic dispositions.
- 1984—Adopted policy forbidding “ordination” or appointment as ministers “self-avowed practicing homosexuals.”
- 1988—Established committee to Study Homosexuality.
- 1992—Received without adopting Report of the Committee to Study Homosexuality.
- 1996—Adopted policy prohibiting UMC ministers from “conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual union” and banning such celebrations from being held in UMC congregations.
- 2004—Added a policy provision declaring that no “annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United

Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. (p. 251)

In addition to this list, Kirk adds that the “[1972 UMC Social Principles] viewed UMC congregants with same-gender erotic predispositions as persons of “sacred worth” who needed the “guidance and ministry of the church” (Kirk, 2009, p. 247).

As demonstrated by the timeline that Kirk provides, The United Methodist Church has consistently taken actions that could be perceived as estranging those who have same-gender erotic predispositions and their supporters. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that those who have same-gender erotic predispositions have “sacred worth.” The United Methodist Church also acknowledges that those who have same-gender erotic predispositions need “guidance and ministry of the Church,” and “spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self” (Alexander, 2012, p. 110). However, The United Methodist Church “considers the practice of homosexuality incompatible with Christian teaching” (Alexander, 2012, p. 110); prohibits United Methodist representative groups from funding gay causes or groups or funding promotions of the acceptance of homosexuality; denies candidacy, ordination, and appointments to self-avowed practicing homosexuals; and prohibits United Methodist ministers from performing or conducting wedding ceremonies or ceremonies that celebrate same-sex unions (Alexander, 2012). The possible penalty for disregarding these dictates includes rescinding ministerial credentials (Alexander, 2012).

In spite of these things, The United Methodist Church has also expressed commitment to lesbian and gay members and friends. *The Book of Discipline* (Alexander, 2012) declares:

We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to respect or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons. (p. 110)

The United Methodist Church's statements reflect an attempt to *manage the tension* between considering "the practice of homosexuality as incompatible with Christian teaching" (Alexander, 2012, p. 110) and welcoming, forgiving, and loving in a way that lesbian and gay persons and heterosexual persons can live together in Christian community (Alexander, 2012).

The actions that The United Methodist Church, and many other denominations, have taken are becoming unacceptable to those with same-gender erotic predisposition and their supporters. The related discourse has intensified. Spong (2005) reports:

In American Methodism's national conference, a body in which the traditional position is still in the majority, those who called for changes to enable the full acceptance of gay people were not just defeated in the assembly vote; they were arrested and jailed when they demonstrated against the winning majority. (p. 117)

The confrontation between the opposing factions threatens the possibility of living together in Christian community. About the brewing conflict, Spong (2005)

vibrantly portrays:

It has all of the *intensity of the final battle of Armageddon* that is supposed to mark the end of the world. The opposing forces consider each other to be mortal enemies. There is no room for compromise between them, no middle ground, just mutually exclusive points of view. Threats and violence are readily employed as the tactics of intimidation. Both sides appeal to God and claim that this fight is waged in the name of all that is deemed holy. The stakes are thought to be so high that many people on both sides assert that Christianity itself will die if the other side prevails. [italics mine] (p. 113)

Is a same-gender eroticism “Armageddon” inevitable? Are there no points of intersection for mutually exclusive points of view? Are there any strategies that Wesleyan theology intersecting with Black church interpretive traditions have to offer that may intervene for these mortal enemies to consider reconciliation? As with the Biblical Armageddon (Revelation 16:16) and for all forms of reconciliation, God’s grace-filled intervention is necessary for these opposing forces to live together in Christian community.

II.B. What Is Being Done with Same-Gender Eroticism?

Discourse related to same-gender erotic predisposition discourse in The United Methodist Church can reasonably be described as *ambiguous, uncomfortable, and highly charged* (see Appendix E). Of the five pastors I interviewed, three suggested that the churches where they serve do not have substantive conversations regarding this issue. The cultural silence of the 1960s

persists in these congregations. **Rev. Barrett** mentioned that it was brought up once at a funeral, but otherwise not considered a real issue (personal interview, 2013, August 7). **Rev. Russell** informed that she is more liberal than the congregation concerning sexuality. When the issue came up once in Bible study, she shared her views and shocked the congregation (personal interview, 2013, July 9). **Rev. Douglas** described the one related encounter he had with his congregants:

Hasn't been raise yet. In vacation Bible school at [the church], had one young lady, she was in, I think a ninth grader, and she raised the question or made a statement that "people ought to be able to love who they want to love." And I wanted to push it a little bit and get a discussion going, but, nobody else, none of the other students or teachers wanted to deal with that. I think they're too much afraid of it. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

On behalf of the congregation that he serves as pastor, **Rev. Ford** asserted a more conservative position regarding same-gender eroticism, declaring:

We're welcoming, loving, friendly. We/They just, hopefully know up front they're not going to hear their same-sex behavior is a grace of God. And, 'cause we just don't believe that. Along with what The United Methodist Church officially believes. We don't believe that. We believe it is incompatible with Christian teaching. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

At the other end of the spectrum, **Rev. Johnson** maintained:

It's not simply about just attracting gay and lesbian folks. It's about attracting their whole family units. We've had gay and lesbian folks come and then their parents come, because their parents get sick and tired of going to a church that's exclusive of their children . . . So it's become a major emphasis in the church. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Even among a small sample size of interviewees, ambiguity prevails. For some, the issue is not substantively addressed, possibly due to the charged nature of the topic. For others, it is a significant issue, which positions them on the opposite side of their “mortal enemy” (Spong, 2005, p. 113).

Amid trials of a pastor who refused membership to a person based on sexual preference (Bloom, 2010), of a pastor for being a self-avowed homosexual (Hahn, 2011b), and of a pastor who performed the same-gender wedding of his son (Gilbert, 2013), dozens of The United Methodist Church’s top episcopal leaders are taking actions and endorsing positions which are opposed to the denomination’s official stance (Hahn, 2011a) and other top episcopal leaders are responding on behalf of the denominations official stance (Hahn, 2013a). The related United Methodist hosted online forum comments (See Appendix E) reflect ambiguity and intensity. In an exchange between Shaffer and Miller, Miller (2013) posts:

There is and should be no question, John that we should continue to affirm all people as children of God and minister to them regardless of their sin on so called ‘non sin’ by so many in the church today. Let’s not forget that at the last General Conference the majority of delegates voted to keep the discipline in tact on this matter and the margin of victory for those who support Scriptural Holiness which requires that we reach out to all in a ministry of love not a ministry of condemnation, but that doesn’t mean that we put our heads in the sand on matters of sin, regardless.

Shaffer (2013) replies:

Over the centuries General Conference has voted for or not voted for lots of things that were out and out wrong. So I am not impressed by the last

General Conference vote which was clearly manipulated by out and out bribes, for one thing. (I was there, by the way.) And General Conference apologized for some (United) Methodist actions of decades ago. And some day General Conference will apologize for the marginalizing of homosexual persons in today's church. And you and I will be dead by that time. And then there are the racial attitudes of United Methodists.

The Shaffer/Miller exchange represents a much more civil discussion than the vast majority of the other posts in the online forum (see Appendix E). The exchange also reflects the vast difference between the mutually exclusive points of view on the issue of same-gender eroticism. Miller highly regards the decision of General Conference and encourages Scriptural Holiness while Shaffer is suspicious of the agenda and politics of General Conference. While Miller, Shaffer, **Rev. Johnson, Rev. Ford, Rev. Douglas, Rev. Russell, Rev. Barrett,** and episcopal leaders may not be aligning for "Armageddon," they do not appear to be quite ready to live together in Christian unity either.

II.C. Why Shall Anything Be Done with Same-Gender Eroticism?

The relevance of and/or how to interpret the Bible is central to the debate between the warring factions in the battle over United Methodism's relationship with those who have same-gender erotic predispositions. The United Methodist Church officially highly reveres the Protestant Christian canon, proclaiming it as the "primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine" (Alexander, 2012, pp. 81–82). This reverence for the Protestant Christian canon and anti-Same-Gender-Erotic-Predisposition sentiment is reinforced by the global nature of United Methodism. Spong (2005) establishes:

Some third world bishops, especially in Africa, feel so deeply about this issue that they are willing to sacrifice their sources of economic support rather than align themselves as part of a church that supports this “condition” they believe to be evil. (p. 117)

The United Methodist Church has officially established that homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teaching (Alexander, 2012). Logically, to change the official position of The United Methodist Church, either the reverence that the denomination holds for the Protestant Christian canon must be minimized or the perceptions of what the Protestant Christian canon teaches must be transformed.

The Protestant Christian canon presents passages related to same-gender eroticism, which Spong (2005) refers to as “Terrible Texts.” Spong (2005) offers four of these texts:

1. Genesis 19:4-5 NKJV - Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.
2. Leviticus 18:22 NKJV - You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.
3. Leviticus 20:13 NKJV - If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.
4. Romans 1:22-27 NKJV - Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for

one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. (pp. 111–112)

To Spong's list I add the following three passages:

1. Ezekiel 16:49 NKJV—Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom:
She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.
2. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV—Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.
3. 1 Timothy 1:9-11 NKJV—knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Those who support the official United Methodist stance might suggest that the message is consistent in the Protestant Christian canon and these passages provide sufficient evidence that same-gender erotic behavior is inconsistent with Christian teaching (Alexander, 2012).

Some who oppose the official position of The United Methodist Church regarding homosexuality questions the contemporary application of Scripture. Kirk (2009) argues, “Biblical *literalism* cannot now (and probably never could) offer a spiritually serious and intellectually honest Christian an absolutely reliable guide to responsible ethical conduct in today’s world” (p. 260). There are passages that seem to support slavery (e.g., Ephesians 6:6-9) and suppress women’s rights (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:34-35), which most contemporary Christians would deem unethical. Kirk (2009) reasons, “I have yet to discover a disparaging reference to UMC congregants with same-gender erotic predispositions that was not, at sometime during my eighty-six years of experiences, used to characterize UMC Blacks” (p. 305). While references to slavery, women’s rights, and homosexuality are sporadic and episodic throughout the Protestant Christian canon, passages relating to the suppression of women’s rights and to the support of slavery are more pervasive than passages relating to homosexuality. Can the related passages be totally ignored? How does ignoring selective passages affect the integrity of the rest of the Protestant Christian canon? These questions call for comprehensive reflection.

Another approach of those who oppose the official position of The United Methodist Church is to view these passages from a *different interpretive framework*. Some consider “love” to be the dominant theme of the Protestant Christian canon, which may be problematic for those against the community of

persons with same-gender erotic predispositions. Hill and Treadway (1998) proclaim, “Our communities have faced outright rejection and oppression from churches claiming to follow Jesus Christ, who, oddly enough, came with a message of love for all and freedom for the oppressed” (p. 237). Briscese (2011) adds in an online blog post:

Jesus was silent on this issue. I have my own theory as to why. Jesus would not openly contradict the old testament [*sic.*]. If you look at the life that Jesus lead, and the company He kept, who became His followers, Jesus did not discriminate. He did not exclude anybody. Jesus included those in His inner circle that others in society found repulsive. Jesus teaches us to LOVE one another, as He has loved us. Jesus teaches us to RESPECT one another. Jesus would NEVER turn anyone anyway who wanted to follow Him. Jesus made room at His table for everyone.

Those who support the official United Methodist position, like Spickard, might respond that the official United Methodist position is not to turn anyone away. However, it declares that homosexuality is a “frailty of the human condition” (Alexander, 2012, p. 220) and those who are subject to that “frailty” should not be appointed as ministers, receive funding from church agencies, or be married in the United Methodist churches or by United Methodist ministers. Spickard (2013) posts, “Don’t forget that even though God is graceful, He is also Judgemental [*sic.*]. I believe Jesus commanded many to go and SIN no more.” Spong (2005) summarizes the argument:

If gay and lesbian people are not welcomed and accepted just as they are, many Christians believe, then the Christian church becomes nothing more than a sectarian movement that has no future. If gay and lesbian people are welcomed and accepted just as they are, many Christians believe,

then morality itself collapses and the system of authority that has marked the Christian past will collapse. [italics mine] (p. 114)

Resolving the impasse about the relevance and/or the interpretation of Scripture between the forces at either pole of the same-gender eroticism discourse *requires God's grace-filled intervention.*

II.D. What Shall Be Done with Same-Gender Eroticism?

I'm not altogether certain that an intersection between Wesleyan theology and Black church interpretive traditions offers sufficient tools and/or strategies for significant or substantive transformation towards reconciliation between the *untied* (see Footnote 1 page 1) opposing forces of same-gender eroticism. With the other estranged parties of social estrangement, there appears to be a general acceptance that reconciliation is the right thing to do. That general acceptance is not present among the parties estranged based on gender erotic predispositions.

Historically, an other-gender eroticism social frame has been dominant in America. In other words, heterosexism has historically ruled. Recently, the dominant American gender-erotic social frame has shifted to be more accepting and inclusive of those who have same-gender erotic predispositions. Kirk (2009) informs that “the secular realms of the larger society are demonstrably far more advanced than the UMC in institutionalizing positive symbolic meaning systems for that segment of the population with same-gender erotic predispositions” (p. 263). While the heterosexism continues to dominate in America, the dominant American heterosexism social frame is remarkably more accommodating to

those who have same-gender erotic predispositions than the dominant United Methodist heterosexism social frame.

One of the criteria that Black liberation and reconciliation theology advances is the necessary exchange of repentance and forgiveness. Neither side of the gender eroticism discourse appears to be eager to participate in this type of exchange. An ethical dissonance separates the opposing forces in the same-gender eroticism conflict. Those who embrace the official United Methodist other-gender eroticism social frame perceive themselves to be justified by Scripture. About the church where he serves as pastor, **Rev. Ford** asserted:

We're welcoming, loving, friendly. We/They just, hopefully know up front they're not going to hear their same-sex behavior is a grace of God. And, 'cause we just don't believe that. Along with what The United Methodist Church officially believes. We don't believe that. We believe it is incompatible with Christian teaching. (personal interview, 2013, July 1)

From a Scriptural and denominational perspective, those who affirm the official United Methodist position do not need to repent. Those who advocate for full-inclusion of those who have same-gender erotic predispositions perceive themselves to be justified by culture, cordiality, and love. Without repentance from the former group, the latter group perceives themselves to have no need to forgive.

The requirement of Black liberation and reconciliation theology for sharing agency, autonomy, and authority also is problematic for the opposing forces. Those who affirm the official United Methodist stance endorse the present

qualified inclusion that declares that those who have same-gender erotic predispositions have “sacred worth” and need guidance and ministry (Alexander, 2012, p. 110), but should not assume certain leadership roles, should not marry, and should not receive advocacy financial support from the church. **Ms. Mason**, who identifies herself as a lesbian, expressed her desire for freedom to live fully before humanity as she lives fully before God. **Ms. Mason** reflected:

I felt like I was also really not into hiding my full self anymore. I was tired of, you know, having these double lives—leaving things out when I talk to my sister, and I gotta alter the story to make it fit. You know, I was tired of the whole business. And so, I wanted to live openly in terms of who I love and who I’m attracted to . . . I am God’s creation. God created me . . . me. You know, and like that was, I finally got that—that God created me and all that I was.

Ms. Mason continued:

Coming to terms with God and my sexuality was a real turning point in my life. ‘Cause I knew who I was and I grew up in churches that preached against homosexuality. And I joined that church in [a state] that was definitely against homosexuality. And, but I knew what choices I’ve made in life and what choices I had not made in life. And who I was attracted to was not a choice I made. So anyway, it was that, that was a really significant period when I felt like me and God were square. We were okay, you know. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Those who have same-gender erotic predispositions desire to be included fully, but are limited in leadership roles, financial support, and familial recognition. Their ability to have unrestrictive sanctuary within the dominant other-gender eroticism social frame is also unlikely.

Perhaps, another model will emerge that will address the estrangement between persons with differing stances related to gender erotic predispositions (e.g., Health/Integration Model and Wholeness/Acceptance Model; Hill & Treadway, 1998). According to Hill and Treadway (1998), the health/integration model is a psychological approach to be applied on a personal level with “An underlying premise that homosexuality is not an illness, but one orientation on the scale of human sexuality, no more or less valid than heterosexuality” (p. 243). The goal of the health/integration psychological approach is to assist persons accept and integrate their gender erotic predisposition as part of their entire being. The wholeness/acceptance model, which is more socially-oriented than the health/integration model, appeals to “Jesus’ example of love, concern, and action on behalf of the outcasts of society” (Hill & Treadway, 1998, p. 244). The wholeness/acceptance model attempts to direct communities of faith towards ending isolation, forming community, and sharing experiences of liberating grace.

An emotional, an interpretive, a theological, a cultural, and an ethical perspective schism persist between the supporters and the opponents of the official United Methodist stance on same-gender eroticism. Without significant holy conversation and social transformation through God’s grace-filled intervention, a permanent physical schism appears to be inevitable. Without a shared ethic, sharing space or anything else is highly unlikely. Regarding same-gender eroticism, The United Methodist Church appears to be proceeding towards being perpetually *untied*.

Part III. Other Ethnic Groups (Korean, Latino/Hispanic, Africans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders)

III.A. What Has Been Done with Other Ethnic Groups?

The resurrected Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles, or sent ones, directing, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NRSV). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the sent ones are instructed to share their Jesus-related experiences with all of humanity. *The Christ-issued mission transcends ethnic, geographic, and cultural boundaries.* The mission is clear, but the method is undefined. How do those whom Jesus sends effectively share the good news of their Jesus-related experiences with cultures and ethnicities that are substantially foreign to their social frame?

From the dominant racial frame in the American context, White missionaries have predominately assumed the role of “sent ones,” who historically have attempted to change other ethnic groups to make them conform to the White racial social frame. Historically, this approach has not been effective and has caused more harm than good to the perception of the character of the dominant culture and to the collective psyche of the other ethnic group(s). **Ms. Nichols**, an immigrant from Liberia, remarked how it was “shocking just seeing the different segregation and racism and stuff that I encountered when I came to the States” (personal interview, 2013, July 28). The U.S. White racial social frame has impacted and continues to impact other ethnic groups along with African

Americans with White views and values being presented as normative (Feagin, 2010). This dominant racial social frame of White views and values has maintained White status as superior to all other race and ethnic groups. Through the White racial social frame, the term “American” is often associated with whiteness (Feagin, 2010, p. 96). Feagin (2010) informs, “Each new group thus encountered and exploited by whites was added to the racial hierarchy and to the white racial frame” (p. 113). As a result, ethnic groups set up anti-oppression counter frames and home-culture frames (Feagin, 2010), which has contributed to segregation from White congregations and congregations of other ethnic groups.

Those who “sell out” their home-culture and conform to the dominant racial frame has a much greater chance at being “successful” in the dominant social order than the members of their home-culture that do not. Feagin (2010) contends that the “rewards of conformity can be tempting” (p. 190). But at what cost? While a non-White person can have a measure of “success” within the White racial social order and may be deemed acceptable as an exception to her or his ethnic group, belonging to the White racial social order is nearly impossible as a non-White person. President Barack Obama, while holding the highest government position in the U.S., is still an outsider to the White racial social order. He is confronted, defied, criticized, demeaned, and teased unlike any other president in U.S. history. *The White racial social order tends to inflict disunity within ethnic groups.* Non-White persons who “sell out” for a measure of “success” within the dominant social culture face possible exile from their home-

culture. Individual persons who transgress ethnic boundaries do not fit into the White social order and their status within their ethnic group is jeopardized.

III.B. What Is Being Done with Other Ethnic Groups?

Some local churches are effective at sharing space across ethnic boundaries, such as the church where **Rev. Ford** serves as pastor, which has 20–30 nationalities represented in worship service each Sunday (**Rev. Ford**, personal interview, 2013, July 1). Others consider transgressing ethnic boundaries as important, but have not discovered practices that translate to effectiveness for them in multi-ethnic ministry. **Rev. Johnson** shared how damaging using unjust approaches to transgressing ethnic boundaries can be.

Rev. Johnson recalled:

We had Latino ministries start throughout our Conference, throughout our District, and they were housed in other Methodist churches. [Our church] was completely wide open, said, “use the building, do whatever you want” . . . But one church in town, you know, they wanted to have, the Latino ministry wanted to cook food, but they wouldn’t let ‘em use the kitchen. What the Hell is up with that? I mean, you know? Do you know any Methodist ministry that has grown without food? I mean seriously, you know? *So, you know, don’t say you’re welcoming unless you’re really gonna be sharing the power.* (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Rev. Johnson’s church, which is effective at transgressing Black/White cultural boundaries, has struggled at transgressing other ethnic boundaries. One of the challenges that **Rev. Johnson** addressed is language. About the Hispanic/Latino population, **Rev. Johnson** pondered:

We do some bi-lingual stuff together with them, but it takes a long time. It takes twice as long. It's harder. It's harder to do than just making it multi-cultural where you're speaking two different cultures with the same language. So, it's, you do it. We don't do it all the time. It just, our services are long enough as it is [*laughter*]. (personal interview, 2013, July 8)

Still others have not given the thought much consideration. Yet, *with the predominant acceptance of segregated congregations*, The United Methodist Church, in general, is ineffective at ministry across ethnic boundaries at the local church level.

The United Methodist Church has been subject to and has perpetuated segregation among ethnic groups. One of the reflections of the perpetuated segregation is through the "Find-A-Church" search tool on the Website of The United Methodist Church (see Appendix B). The "Find-A-Church" search tool allows the user to filter through churches by ethnicity: "Caucasian/White"—which is prominently listed first, while all other ethnic groups are listed alphabetically—"Asian," "African/Black," "Hispanic," "Native American," and "Pacific Islander." While the tool is designed to help persons find settings where they may find unrestrictive sanctuary among their ethnic group, there are some unsettling messages that accompany the convenience. One message is that The United Methodist Church *accepts the reality of segregated congregations as normative and is comfortable with maintaining the cultural boundaries among its constituents*. Another message is that this search tool *serves notice as to where particular ethnic groups are supposed to gather and those persons may not be*

comfortable in settings that are not designated for their ethnic group. While persons crossing ethnic boundaries may be comfortable in settings not designated to their ethnic group, the message of the search tool is eerily familiar to the “Whites Only” and “Coloreds Only” signs of the Jim Crow era.

These designations for ethnic groups are also problematic because none of the ethnic designations represent a monolithic group. Each designation represents scores of peoples with many cultural nuances (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, and Native American). Further, separate ethnically-defined caucuses have been established to represent the interests of individual ethnic groups—e.g., Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Methodists Associated to Represent Hispanic Americans, Native American International Caucus, National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, and Pacific Islanders National Caucus United Methodist (Alexander, 2012, p. 574). Assessing this phenomenon, African American pastor, **Rev. Douglas** resolved:

We are perpetuating the divisions ourselves by, not just by funding these organizations, but putting them, making them operate in silos. If you are there to make sure that your culture is not overlooked, that’s one thing. But when you’re there to just make sure your culture is perpetuated and does not get influenced by anything else, that’s wrong. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

Ethnic groups are pitted against one another. This sets up silos and promotes alienation among ethnic groups. Roberts (2005) conveys, “The tension is now at an epidemic stage between blacks and Hispanics, blacks and Asians, as well as

others. Other nonwhite ethnic peoples are competing with blacks in urban America for limited resources” (p. xiii). Feagin (2010) further elaborates:

[Latino and Asian immigrants], as well as other Americans of color who have been in the country for a long time, often accept significant parts of the dominant white racial framing—sometimes including negative stereotypes and framing that whites have historically directed at their own Latino, Asian, African, and Native American groups. Americans of color that I and my colleagues have recently interviewed often buy so strongly into the white racial framing of yet other Americans of color that they do not trust or relate well to the latter. Such cross-racial framing makes intergroup collaboration and cooperation in the struggle against white racism much more difficult. (p. 120)

*The silos not only alienate each ethnic group from sharing space with White congregations, but also alienate each ethnic group from one another. Without significant holy conversation with other ethnic groups, each ethnic group assumes the White social frame representation about the other ethnic groups, making it difficult for them to progress from being *untied* to being *united*.*

III.C. Why Should Anything Be Done with Other Ethnic Groups?

The same rationale used for Black/White reconciliation applies to reconciliation among ethnic groups. The love and unity revealed as the nature of the Church in Scripture and illumined by Methodist written tradition unambiguously calls for reconciliation across ethnic boundaries. Drawing from Wesley’s “Catholic Spirit” sermon, Heitzenrater (1995) surmises that Wesley resolved that love of God and love of neighbor revealed through works of piety and mercy cuts across the boundaries of denominations. Certainly, the same conclusion can be applied across boundaries of ethnicity. As joint-heirs of the

Christian and Methodist movements, United Methodists should continually hope for a better reality, as Pastor **Rev. Douglas** does. **Rev. Douglas** envisioned:

A lot of people use the analogy of America being a melting pot. No such thing. Never has been. Never will be. And I don't want it to be. I told the congregation, "I do not like tomato soup. It's plain. Every spoonful is just alike. I like a stew, where I can taste my potatoes, my carrots, my onions, my meat, all of the different things. And it's all better because you got it all together." And that's the way church ought to be. (personal interview, 2013, July 25)

The ingredients of the United Methodist stew are now stored in separate packages. From local churches, through local and denominational agencies, and throughout the United Methodist hierarchy, United Methodists should reclaim and restore our Christian and Methodist heritage. *By the grace of God, United Methodism has the heritage, responsibility, and a measure of resources to provide leadership in intervening against the dominant racial social frame and transforming society through substantive racial reconciliation.*

III.D. What Shall Be Done with Other Ethnic Groups?

From a missiological perspective, Christians have consistently attempted to persuade others to abandon their social frames and assimilate them into their social frames, which have consistently damaged the persons being assimilated and the perception of Christianity. Wesleyan theology intersected by Black church interpretive traditions offers an alternate approach for sharing space that honors the heritage and humanity of everyone involved. Again, the practices, criteria, and means of grace extracted from examining Wesleyan theology

intersected by Black church interpretive traditions apply to transgressing boundaries across ethnic boundaries. In a social movement with holy conversation as a central means of distributing God's grace justly among all present, diverse congregants can be free and empowered to extend repentance and receive forgiveness in unrestrictive sanctuary.

Reconciliation across ethnic boundaries will be a process that will take a considerable amount of time and intentionality. Sonia Nieto offers a model for schools to transition from monocultural settings to settings with multiple ethnic groups represented with a primary ethos of affirmation, solidarity and critique. Nieto's model provides substance for churches in transition for movement towards a just ethnic social frame. Nieto's model moves a monocultural setting through tolerance, acceptance, and respect towards *affirmation, solidarity, and critique* (Nieto, 2002). About the monocultural setting, Nieto (2002) describes, "structures, policies, curricula, instructional materials, and even pedagogical experiences are primarily representative of only the dominant culture" (p. 8). Nieto infers that toleration, or enduring but not embracing others, leads to acceptance, or acknowledging the importance of others. Acceptance leads to respect, or admiring and highly esteeming diversity. Ultimately, the functional multicultural ethos includes affirmation, solidarity and critique, about which Nieto (2002) expounds:

Students work and struggle with one another, even if it is sometimes difficult and challenging. It begins with the assumption that the many differences that students and their families represent are embraced and

accepted as legitimate vehicles for learning and these are then extended . . . conflict is not avoided, but rather accepted as an inevitable part of learning. (p. 15)

Nieto acknowledges the inevitability of conflict in multicultural settings. She recommends embracing conflicts as “vehicles for learning” rather than encounters that should be avoided. Nieto (2002) continues:

Because multicultural education at this level is concerned with equity and social justice and because the basic values of different groups are often diametrically opposed, conflict is bound to occur. Affirmation, solidarity and critique is based on understanding that culture is not a fixed or unchangeable artifact and is therefore subject to critique . . . Multicultural education without critique may result in cultures remaining at the romantic or exotic stage. (p. 15)

Likewise, local churches in their quest for a more just ethnic social frame should not settle for a culture of toleration, acceptance, or even respect. Local churches should struggle through these stages and strive for a dominant social frame which has a primary ethos of affirmation, solidarity, and critique.

During the reconciliation process, those involved will have to be *willing to live with some ambiguities and to expect conflict as cultures collide*. Those striving for a more just ethnic social structure should not allow conflicts to isolate, but rather use conflicts as tools to better define the new rules and world (Powell, 1997) of the *new community, or the new social frame*. Also, while the new social frame is emerging and while the collective holy conversation continues, White constituents should recognize the *need for ethnic groups to caucus*. The ethnic groups should recognize that their need to caucus is not to vie for resources, but

to deliberate about the impact that the emerging social frame might have on those present, external members of the ethnic group, and members of the ethnic group who might enter the new social frame after them. The ethnic group should also use the caucus to strategize about negotiation for a more just cultural frame. Caucusing also will allow for members of ethnic groups to retreat for unrestrictive sanctuary in their home-culture frame and anti-oppression counter-frame (Feagin, 2010) while the more just social frame is emerging.

Conclusion

The United Methodist Church claims to be a people with “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.” Presently, The United Methodist Church has many open doors. Yet every door does not lead to space where everyone can be affirmed by and in solidarity with the persons on the inside. Behind some of those doors, those who are impoverished, those who view same gender eroticism differently, and/or those who are of a different ethnicity may not be welcomed. Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology proposes social movement with holy conversation as a central means of distributing God’s grace justly among all present where diverse congregants can be free and empowered to extend repentance and receive forgiveness in unrestrictive sanctuary.

As we discover with *untied* same-gender eroticism opponents, Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology is not a panacea for all relational estrangement. Perhaps, another model will emerge to

inform a responsible, authentic, and sustainable transformation towards reconciliation before Same-Gender Armageddon occurs. Nevertheless, as with Black/White estrangement, Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology provides a model that can be used for justly transgressing socio-economic and ethnic boundaries so that across cultural boundaries, United Methodists can responsibly and authentically share hearts, hands, space, time, language, financial resources, personnel, stories, traditions, interpretive frameworks, authority, and experiences and teach others to do the same.

CHAPTER VII

DISSERTATION CONCLUSION

In Part One of this dissertation (*Chapters II-V*), “Black and White Race Reconciliation,” I explore race relations between Black and White persons in The United Methodist Church within the American context through the lens of Wesleyan theology intersecting with Black church interpretive community and traditions. Methodism was established in America with a mainly White mainstream and a smaller population of Black congregants and congregations. The Black congregants within The United Methodist Church have been challenged to maintain their connections with Black church interpretive community and traditions while practicing Christianity within the mainly White mainstream United Methodist Church in America.

I argue that Black church interpretive community and interpretive traditions are valuable to both Black and White persons. I attempt to establish that the spirit of John Wesley and early Methodists coupled with Black church interpretive traditions can lead to liberation and reconciliation. I evaluate the cases for and against Black/White race reconciliation within The United Methodist Church and attempt to establish that The United Methodist Church has the responsibility to intervene for racial reconciliation considering dictates from Scripture, United Methodist tradition, United Methodist collective experiences, and thoughtful

deliberation. In Part Two of this Dissertation (*Chapter VI*), “Class, Gender, and Ethnic Reconciliation,” I apply practices and principles drawn from intersecting Black church interpretive traditions with Wesleyan theology to exploring possibilities for reconciliation among estranged class, gender erotic predispositions, and ethnic groups—including Korean, Latino/Hispanic, Africans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

In *Chapter II*, I analyze complexities of “Being Black and Being United Methodist in America.” In this chapter, I offer a self-critique of my Blackness and my United Methodism. My entry into The United Methodist Church regarding race was un-critical and non-conscious (see Footnote 4, page 12). I entered through a Black congregation that reflected the practices of the Black church—e.g., *upbeat and up-tempo worship, rhythmic preaching, gospel songs and spirituals through choirs with improvisational lead singers, call and response interaction between the preacher and the congregation, sermons that held justice and mercy in tension through hope, and worship experiences that are not constrained by time limits*. I have not found these practices to be in conflict with United Methodism. In fact, they enhance United Methodism for me.

However, I have become conscious that contemporary United Methodism is subject to and, in many ways, advances the American White racial social frame that promotes White superiority and Black inferiority (Feagin, 2010). Yet, John Wesley and other early Methodists opposed racist structures. In *Chapter II*, I connect racial justice with early Methodism and deduced that the social race

frame prevalent in The United Methodist Church is akin to the “execrable villainy” and “scandal of religion” (Tomkins, 2007, p. 93) that John Wesley writes about to describe slavery. For the people called “Methodist” who consider themselves to be “United,” practicing Christianity closer to the way Wesley and early Methodists did could lead to resistance against the “execrable villainy” of the American White racial social frame.

In *Chapter II*, I also offer a concise presentation of the Black experience in America. Black church interpretive community and traditions have much to contribute to both Black Methodists and White Methodists who are attempting to navigate within the American White racial social frame. Roberts (1971/2005) proclaims, “*The black church, in setting black people free, may make freedom possible for white people as well. Whites are victimized as the sponsors of hate and prejudice which keeps racism alive*” (p. 33). The Black church offers profound and practical responses to existential predicaments that *all* people face, including:

- Profound theology related to “life and death, suffering and sorrow, love and judgment, grace and hope, justice and mercy” (McClain, 1990, p. 46);
- Concern for liberation of *all* human beings (Williams, 1993);
- Counter-frames to the dominant White racial social frame (Feagin, 2010);

- Less rigid and more spontaneous worship experiences (McClain, 1990); and
- More exuberant and emotive styles of worship (Brooks, 2012).

A theology of liberation and reconciliation drawn from Black church interpretive community and traditions presents demands for meaningful

reconciliation—including repentance and forgiveness among the estranged cultural representatives; agency, authority, and autonomy for all cultural representatives; and unrestrictive sanctuary for all cultural representatives.

Reconciliation between Black Methodists and White Methodists should be more profound and radical. However, it should not be at the expense of suppressing identity or ignoring disparity among race groups.

In *Chapter III*, I respond to the question, “What has been done with African Americans?” through exploring the historical and the contemporary racial climate in America, in American public school systems, and in The United Methodist Church in America. America has an embarrassing history of more than two centuries of racism—including displacing indigenous peoples, importing and enslaving Africans, legally and brutally enforcing segregation of African Americans from White Americans and, and exploiting and criminalizing Latino/a and Hispanic immigrants. Contemporary America remains racially divided (Feagin, 2010; Emerson & Smith, 2000) and structures that support racial injustice are still in place (Alexander, 2010/2012). *Those who have been oppressed in America have developed anti-oppression “counter-frames” and*

“home-culture frames” to collectively negotiate the dominant White racial social frame (Feagin, 2010, p. 19).

The following data illustrates the magnitude of estranged race relations in America:

- Feagin (2010) notes that a “substantial majority of African Americans today still live in just fifteen of the fifty U.S. states” and that America still reflects a “highly segregated residential pattern” (p. 2).
- Emerson and Smith (2000) report that 90% of church-going African Americans attend predominantly Black congregations and at least 95% of church-going White Americans—and probably higher—attend white churches.
- Emerson and Smith (2000) report that only 33% of African American Protestants and 4% of White Protestants named racism among the top issues with which Christians should be concerned.

American racial division and unjust racial structures pervade American institutions, including public schools. I argue that the American educational experiment, which was not initially designed for the betterment of African Americans, has been catastrophic for African American students—including years of blatant systematic exclusion, dismissal, oppression, and destruction. The following data substantiate how catastrophic the American education experiment has been for African Americans:

- According to the Schott Foundation (2012), for 2010, 52% of African American males completed high school in four years.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), in 2003, only 2% of the Black population read at a proficient level.
- Hart and Risley (1999) report that the families in the upper socioeconomic status used 2,153 words per hour versus 616 words per hour used in families who received assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). All of the families observed who received AFDC assistance were African American.
- According to the United States Department of Education Office for Civil

Rights:

- African-American students are over 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers who are white;
- African-American students represent 18% of students in the [Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)] sample, but 35% of students suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of students expelled;
- Over 70% of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American; and
- One in five African-American boys and more than one in ten African-American girls received an out-of-school suspension. (U.S. Department of Education, 2012)

Woodson (1933) describes those students who successfully navigate through the system designed for their servility as “mis-educated” (p. 20). Those who consciously or non-consciously resist mis-education are considered disruptive and are criminalized. Many are expelled or drop out. The American public

school systems provide a snapshot of the predicaments that Black persons face while trying to navigate within the dominant White racial social frame in American society.

In *Chapter III*, I also discuss the more than two centuries of racism in American Methodism, which yielded two distinct branches of local Methodist congregations—Black and White. The following data demonstrates the estrangement that pervades Black and White congregants in The United Methodist Church:

- The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized in 1784, and by 1789, “colored” members were reported to be in 36 of the 51 churches (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011, p. 13).
- Addo and McCallum (1980/2011) inform that by 1795, there were 8,414 white members and 1,719 black members of Methodists societies in North Carolina.
- Only a small fraction (dozens) of the approximately 34,000 United Methodist local congregations in the United States (United Methodist Communications, 2011a) identify themselves as multi-ethnic or multi-cultural.
- Less than 1% of the 1,100 United Methodist local churches in the Western North Carolina Conference (The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d.) self-identify as multi-ethnic or inter-racial.

- Less than 1% of the appointed clergy in the Western North Carolina Conference serves as pastor of a congregation whose primary ethnic composition is different than hers or his.
- The United Methodist Church has 1,923 churches in North Carolina. Of those churches, 131 are considered “African/Black.” Of the “African/Black” churches, *4 have an average worship attendance of more than 200*, the largest being 380. There are 228 churches that are considered to be “Caucasian/White” that have average worship attendance of more than 200, the largest being 2,188.

American Methodism has historically exiled Black congregants and congregations: To the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1822, to the Colored/Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1870, and to the Central Jurisdiction in 1939. In 1968, at the formation of The United Methodist Church, the all-Black Central Jurisdiction was absorbed into the mainstream majority White United Methodist Church, but the other exiled denominations remain. The United Methodist Church has since declared a commitment to racial justice (Alexander, 2012).

In *Chapter III*, I also include an evaluation of the statements of priorities of 51 theological schools (theorists; see Appendix H and Appendix I) and 45 annual conferences (practitioners; see Appendix F and Appendix G) of The United Methodist Church. Thirteen of the theological schools are United Methodist and 38 are affiliate schools that have been approved by the University Senate (see

Footnote 3, page 5) of The United Methodist Church. An analysis of the statements of priorities reveals:

Annual Conferences

- Of the 45 annual conferences who published mission statements on their website, 32 mentioned making *disciples*, creating *disciples*, sending forth *disciples*, becoming *disciples*, growing *disciples*, and reaching *seekers of faith*.
- Granted, 45% of the statements are *affirmations of the denominational mission statement*—"Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (Alexander, 2012, p. 91)—with little or no commentary.
- *Transformation* is a recurring theme, referenced in the statements of 24 of the annual conferences.
- In spite of the emphatic proclamations of The United Methodist Church regarding *poverty*, only the Red Bird Missionary Conference in Kentucky (2012) addresses poverty in its statement, declaring "Its goal is to minister to the whole person by addressing spiritual, physical, educational and economic needs" (para. 1).
- Thirteen of the annual conferences express their commitment to *diversity* and/or ministry with *all* people in their statements, such as the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Annual Conference (2012), who commits

“to affirm our cultures and witness to God’s grace through our native languages, hymns, and traditions” (para. 1).

- Only the Holston Conference (2013) of Tennessee specifically mentions *justice*, envisioning, “risk-taking love for all God’s children until Holston Conference reflects the saving grace and *redeeming justice* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (para. 1).

Seminaries and Theological Schools

- All 13 *United Methodist theological schools* publish a commitment to cultivating, educating, preparing, empowering, forming, or invigorating *leaders* in their statements. Twenty-three of the 38 *non-United Methodist theological schools* also express *leadership* development as a priority.
- Ten of the 13 *United Methodist theological schools* refer to “*tradition*,” while five of these schools specifically mention Wesleyan or United Methodist tradition. The statements of ten of the 38 *affiliate schools* include “*tradition*,” though none of the *affiliate theological schools* refer to Wesleyan or United Methodist tradition. In fact, some of the schools refer to other faith traditions, including Reformed, Presbyterian-Reformed, Moravian, and Anglican.
- *Social transformation* is more thematic for *United Methodist theological schools* than for annual conferences, being mentioned in ten of the

thirteen mission statements. Nine of the 38 *affiliate schools* mention *social transformation* in their statements.

- None of the schools' commitment statements mention *poverty* or ministry with those who are impoverished.
- *Justice* was more thematic with the theological schools than with the annual conferences, with 14 of the theological schools (27.5%) expressing commitment to *justice*. However, only the Pacific School of Religion (2004) specifically emphasized racial/ethnic justice.
- Thirty-one percent of the schools addressed *diversity* in their statements: Nine of the *United Methodist theological schools* and seven of the *affiliate schools*.
- While the theological schools do not consistently reference *making disciples* in their statements, 37% reflect a commitment to *social transformation*.
- *United Methodist theological schools* reveals a general concern for *social transformation*, with 58% of the United Methodist institutions' commitment statements making reference to social transformation.

The practitioners make allusions to “diversity” rather than to “racial justice.”

Racial justice is more thematic among the theorists than among the practitioners.

However, the theorists are not as militant in their rhetorical commitment as the

denomination,¹¹ as a whole, is. The theorists' and practitioners' statements of priority do not reflect the denomination's expressed concern for racial justice.

Black and White Methodist theorists and practitioners must embrace and promote the expressed denominational commitment to racial justice in rhetoric and practice in order for reconciliation to be substantive and sustainable.

In *Chapter IV*, I offer a response to the question, "Why do anything with African Americans?" I evaluate rationale for and implications of reconciliation between Black Methodists and White Methodists within The United Methodist Church. From the majority population perspective, Wesleyan Theology offers standards of Wesley's general rules (*do good, do no harm, attend to the ordinances of God*), a commitment to social justice, and a profound appreciation for the *grace of God*—which the denomination understands as "the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit" (Alexander, 2012, p. 49). No reconciliation work can be done through human strength alone, but requires the *grace of God*.

Analyzing how John Wesley practiced theology, Albert Outler established the Wesleyan quadrilateral, about which Outler (2003) describes, "Of all affirmations—[Wesley's] own and others—he demanded that they be rooted in the *Bible*, illumined by *tradition*, realized in *experience* and confirmed by *reason*—all together but none apart from the others" [italics mine] (p. 31). Using

¹¹ United Methodist representatives from across the denomination meet every four years in "General Conference" "To set policy, approve legislation, and issue pronouncements on behalf of the entire connection" (Frank, 2002, p. 255).

the Wesleyan quadrilateral for doing theology as a theological/theoretical framework, *Chapter IV* analyzed the rationale for reconciliation through the lenses of (a) *Scripture*, (b) *tradition*, (c) *experience*, and (d) *reason*. From a *Scriptural* lens, the Protestant Christian canon, which United Methodists perceive to reveal the living core of the Christian faith (Alexander, 2012), consistently advocates and instructs for reconciliation. United Methodists consider Christian and Methodist writings, creeds, teachings, and other literature as *tradition* (Alexander, 2012), which by and large expresses commitment to diversity, solidarity, inclusivity, and racial justice. However, some official Methodist documents, including the “Plan of Separation” of 1844, contradict an ethos of reconciliation. In practice (*experience*), racial estrangement pervades The United Methodist Church through segregated local congregations and systemic practices that support the American White racial social frame (e.g., distribution of resources, selection of leadership, and appointment of clergy). Maintaining racially segregated congregations where members of race groups can be comfortable in their home-culture is considered reasonable for some missional and/or sociological strategists (Wagner, 1979). However, from a contemporary cultural perspective—while likely more for economic or political reasons than for principles of justice—military, corporate, academic, and other entities have advanced towards racial diversity and inclusivity. The institutional church has both a moral imperative and moral devices—e.g., confession, repentance, and forgiveness (Emerson & Smith, 2000)—to contribute to substantive and

sustainable race reconciliation. There are some contradictions among the sources of the Wesleyan quadrilateral regarding racial justice. *Yet, based on the consistent message of the primary source—Scripture—and a prevalence of support among the other sources, this dissertation contends that The United Methodist Church has the Scriptural heritage, written tradition, social responsibility, spiritual capacity, organizational structure, and self-discerned mandate to become a site where racial social transformation can occur.*

In *Chapter V*, I present reconciliation in action at the personal/local church level. I analyze personal narratives from interviews of Black pastors serving majority White congregations, of White pastors serving multi-ethnic congregations, and of congregants from multi-ethnic congregations. *These narratives revealed cultural collisions related to preaching styles, music, length of service, theological emphases, expressions of reverence, language, and histories.* These interactions occurred in the midst of an American dominant cultural frame that promotes White superiority and Black inferiority. However, those involved in these settings where cultural boundaries are transgressed demonstrated courage and persistence and provided principles and practices that can contribute to meaningful social transformation. These practices include:

- celebrating difference and embracing similarities, where appropriate;
- preserving shared space as sacred and safe space through holy conversation;

- being invitational and welcoming to everyone, regardless of race identity;
- being community-oriented and community-reflective in race and class composition;
- projecting a sense of purpose and identity;
- encouraging innovation;
- managing the tension between being evangelical and being social justice oriented;
- managing the tension between being intentional and being organic about diversity and racial justice; and
- being mindful of the levels of sacrifice that each cultural group makes in order to accommodate other cultural groups.

These practices coupled with Wesleyan theology and Black church interpretive traditions provide a comprehensive response to the question, “What shall be done with Black people?” One of the interviewees, **Rev. Ford**, summarizes a responsible response for diverse cultures to share space—be “just plain Christian” (personal interview, 2013, July 1).

In Part Two of this dissertation, “Class, Gender, and Ethnic Reconciliation,” I provide a response to the question, “What shall be done with the others of us?” In *Chapter VI*, I apply the theology of reconciliation regarding race established in Part One of this dissertation to other areas of social estrangement in church and society—including socioeconomic *irreconciliation*,

gender eroticism *irreconciliation*, and *irreconciliation* with and among other ethnicities. I argue that other estranged social groups share the same predicament as exiled Children of Israel and African Americans. Black persons, persons who are impoverished, persons with same-gender erotic predispositions, and persons with ethnic identities other than Black or White live among captors and tormentors. Along with the dominant White racial social frame, a privileged-class social frame and an other-gender erotic predisposition social frame pervades American and United Methodist cultures. Persons who are marginal to these dominant social frames are expected to respond to their subservient settings with singing. “How could we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4).

American Methodism began as a movement among “ordinary people” (Weems, 2012, p. 83). John Wesley and his contemporaries offered direct relief to those who were impoverished (Heitzenrater, 1995, pp. 166–167). Wesley issued a socio-ethical response to the spirit of capitalism, “*Gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can*” [italics mine] (Marquadt, 1992, p. 35). As Methodists adhered closely to the first two directives and not as closely to the third, they increasingly became more upper-middle class (Weems, 2012) and assumed consumerist postures. Consumerist Methodists overlook and ignore those who are impoverished and outsource ministry with those who are impoverished to consumer-oriented persons, agencies, and institutions. United Methodists rhetorically advocate for ministry with and on behalf of those who are

impoverished (Alexander, 2012). United Methodists—in the spirit of their Christian and Methodist theology and tradition and through the liberating and reconciling *grace of God*—should provide unrestrictive sanctuary for and share unrestrictive sanctuary with those who are impoverished.

Other ethnic groups, along with Black persons, are subject to the dominant American White racial social frame that pervades United Methodism. In this social frame, members of ethnic groups are gathered in silos, having minimal interactions with members of other ethnic groups. Further, members of ethnic groups are persuaded to accept and apply the dominant superiority/inferiority ideology towards members of other ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are encouraged to compete against one another for acknowledgement, leadership roles, and financial resources. These practices impede reconciliation across ethnic boundaries. Christian and United Methodist theology and tradition should provoke intervention for a new social frame that supplants the dominant White racial social frame. Sonia Nieto offers a model, which advances a social setting from monocultural through toleration, acceptance, and respect toward a more just social order of affirmation, solidarity, and critique (Nieto, 2002). In the more just social order, cultural collisions are expected and are used as “vehicles for learning” (Nieto, 2002, p. 15). Nieto’s model can advance United Methodists towards substantive and sustainable reconciliation.

The principles and practices of reconciliation established from exploring Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology have

logical correspondence for reconciliation across socio-economic class boundaries and across ethnic boundaries with those who are not Black or White. However, applying the principles and practices to those estranged based on gender erotic predispositions proved to be more problematic. In other areas, the estranged parties perceive that reconciliation is the right thing to do. Those estranged based on their position on gender erotic disposition do not recognize reconciliation with those at the other end of the spectrum as the right thing to do. The official United Methodist position is that practicing same-gender erotic behavior is not compatible with Christian teaching (Alexander, 2012), yet, also, that God's grace is available to *all* (Alexander, 2012). Against those who practice same-gender erotic behavior, The United Methodist Church officially denies privileges related to familial recognition, financial support, and accessibility to leadership roles (Alexander, 2012). United Methodist discourse related to same-gender eroticism is impassioned (see Appendix E). Some appeal to the relatively few passages from the Protestant Christian canon that are hostile towards practicing same-gender erotic behavior. Others appeal to the themes of love and reconciliation that recur throughout the Protestant Christian canon. Holy conversation among polar opposites regarding gender erotic predispositions is virtually impracticable without willingness to share agency, authority, and autonomy—which are demands of Black theology for liberation and reconciliation. Another model for reconciliation across gender eroticism boundaries—e.g., Health/Integration Model and Wholeness/Acceptance Model

(Hill & Treadway, 1998)—may be more effective for reconciling persons who are estranged because of differing gender erotic predispositions.

John Fawcett's Hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" published in the United Methodist Hymnal captures the essence of reconciliation. The third stanza proclaims, "We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear" (Young, 1989, p. 557). The motto of The United Methodist Church is "Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors" and part of its stated mission includes participation in the "transformation of the world" (Alexander, 2012, p. 91). I hope this dissertation can contribute to The United Methodist Church living into its motto and mission more substantively. I hope that Black church interpretive traditions intersecting with Wesleyan theology can provide a model for regenerating social movement and restoring holy conversation across racial, congregational, and time-restrictive (quadrennial conference and annual conference) boundaries. As a pastor of a United Methodist congregation, I assume a measure of responsibility and am willing to leverage whatever measure of agency that I have towards the task of advancing reconciliation movement. I hope this dissertation can contribute to discourse that will move The United Methodist Church towards providing society with a model of social reconciliation where estranged social groups can responsibly and authentically share hearts, hands, space, time, language, financial resources, personnel, stories, traditions, interpretive frameworks, authority, and experiences and teach others to do the same.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). While not having equitable authority, autonomy, and agency within the Methodist Episcopal Church, African Americans in Philadelphia separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church and established the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1816 (Addo & McCallum, 1980/2011, pp. 15–16). According to Frank (2002) the AME Church is rooted in Methodist discipline, polity, and practice.

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ). As a result of racial friction—slavery, humiliation, and persecution—in New York City, African Americans in New York City withdrew from a Methodist Episcopal congregation and formed the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church in 1896. The members of the AMEZ Church voted themselves out of the Methodist Episcopal Church and published their first *Discipline* in 1820, officially establishing them as a separate entity (Walls, 1974). According to Frank (2002), The AMEZ Church is rooted in Methodist discipline, polity, and practice.

Annual Conference. Annual conferences are governing bodies in regional or episcopal areas within The United Methodist Church. Annual conferences are also yearly meetings that occur among delegates from each church within the geographic boundaries of the Annual Conference (Alexander, 2012, pp. 32–34). Since 1972, as Frank (2002) explains, “Annual conferences have become large administrative units with full-time staff handling millions of

dollars in pension and insurance plans as well as conference-wide programs” (p. 289).

Bishop. Bishops are general superintendents of regional or episcopal areas. Bishops are elected from among the order of elders. According to Frank (2002), “‘Superintendency’ is a term that Wesley created as a translation of the biblical *episkopos*—the office of oversight of the church” (p. 231). Each active bishop presides over one or more annual conference(s). The bishop appoints clergy members to local churches within the annual conference. Bishops across the denomination collectively form the Council of Bishops, which provides leadership within The United Methodist Church (Alexander, 2012).

Book of Discipline. According to the Council of Bishops, “The *Book of Discipline* is the most current statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together” (Alexander, 2012, pp. v–vi). Since the institution of the Methodist movement, the *Book of Discipline* has documented the polity of the Methodist Episcopal Church and its descendent denominations through continuous revisions and publications (Frank, 2002). The contents of the *Book of Discipline* are reviewed every four years at General Conference and updated as deemed necessary by representatives of the denomination (Alexander, 2012).

Central Jurisdiction. In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery to form “the Methodist Episcopal Church” and “the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.” In 1939, the two branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church reunited and joined with the Methodist Protestant Church to form The

Methodist Church. All remaining African Americans were segregated into the “Central Jurisdiction” within The Methodist Church. The “Central Jurisdiction” was dissolved in 1968 at the formation of The United Methodist Church (Kirk, 2009). Frank (2002) grieves:

Not only is [The Central Jurisdiction] a jarring example of how church polity is sometimes worked out on the backs of the voiceless. It is also a scar on the body of Christ that continues to ache with the church’s failure at true fellowship. (p. 92)

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME). In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery to form “the Methodist Episcopal Church” and “the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.” In 1866, “The Methodist Episcopal Church, South” exiled all of the African American constituents into the “*Colored* Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church.” The CME designation was changed to be represented by “*Christian* Methodist Episcopal” in 1954 (Frank, 2002, p. 92).

District Superintendent. Within The United Methodist Church, district superintendents provide leadership in smaller geographic areas, or districts, within annual conferences and serve under the supervision of a bishop (Alexander, 2012). Frank (2002) offers five tasks that occupy the majority of each district superintendent’s time: 1) working with pastors, 2) working with local church administration, 3) handling all church property in the district, 4) communicating information from annual conference or general church agencies to local churches and pastors, and 5) starting new churches).

General Conference. General conference is the legislative governing body of The United Methodist Church. Delegates from annual conferences meet for eleven days every four years. Frank (2002) describes, “The General Conference brings together a thousand United Methodists from over twenty nations to set policy, approve legislation, and issue pronouncements on behalf of the entire connection” (p. 255). According to the Council of Bishops, “Each General Conference amends, perfects, clarifies, and adds its own contribution to the *Discipline*” (Alexander, 2012, pp. v–vi).

Missional Networks. Within some districts (small geographic areas) in The United Methodist Church, several local churches gather to form missional networks. Missional networks are designed to provide material connections between local churches and to facilitate collaboration between local churches towards living into and carrying out the mission of The United Methodist Church.

Same-Gender Erotic Predisposition. W. Astor Kirk prefers the term “same gender” over the term “same sex” as the term “sex” has connotations beyond biological differentiation. Kirk relates “erotic” to emotional attraction and stimulation, desire, activity, and satisfaction. Therefore, Kirk defines “same-gender erotic” as “an emotional and erotic attraction to persons of the same gender” (Kirk, 2009, p. 481).

The United Methodist Church (UMC). The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 as a result of a merger between The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren, making it one of the largest Protestant

denominations in the world (Alexander, 2012). The United Methodist Church has an episcopal polity with elected bishops providing general supervision (Alexander, 2012). According to “the Historical Statement” of The United Methodist Church, “The Church has endeavored to become a community in which all persons, regardless of racial or ethnic background, can participate in every level of its connectional life and ministry” (Alexander, 2012, p. 22).

University Senate. The University Senate is authorized by The United Methodist Church to review schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools to determine if they meet the criteria to be listed as an affiliate and receive support from The United Methodist Church.

APPENDIX B

SEARCH TOOL FROM THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WEBSITE

Archives.UMC.org/Directory/ChurchDirectoryAdvanced.asp?mid=222

Find-A-Church

by Ethnicity ✓

- Caucasian/White
- Asian
- African/Black
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Pacific Islander

by Ethnicity

No filter on Certified

NEAR THIS LOCATION

Street or address

City

Select a State

Zip

WITHIN THIS RADIUS

Any Distance

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?
If you have any questions
[Ask InfoServ](#)

CHURCHES OUTSIDE OF THE USA
Locate contact information for church offices outside the United States.
[Locate Information Now](#)

FIND OTHER MINISTRIES
Locate boards, agencies, regional offices, and other ministries.
[Go to the Directory](#)

UPDATE YOUR CHURCH INFORMATION
Welcome new visitors to your church by updating your Find-A-Church Information.
[Update Your Page Now](#)

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Untied and United Methodists: Transforming Social Relations within The United Methodist Church and beyond through Liberation and Reconciliation

Project Director: Otto D. Harris III

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. This study will explore how The United Methodist Church can be more vital and actively engaged in social transformation, particularly concerning race relations.

Why are you asking me?

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your church's engagement in multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic ministry.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

You will be interviewed by the researcher in person. The interview may last between 30 minutes and 90 minutes. The researcher does not anticipate a need for follow-up contact after the interview.

Is there any audio/video recording?

The content of the interview will be captured by audio recording. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Because the number of churches in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church engaged in multi-cultural and/or multi-ethnic ministry is minimal, your church may be easily identified.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Otto D. Harris III, who may be reached at (336) 580-2338 or odharris@uncg.edu or faculty advisor H. Svi Shapiro at (336) 256-0156 or hsshapiro@uncg.edu.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

This study may contribute to the discourse that will move The United Methodist Church towards social transformation related to race relations, socio-economic class relations, and relations between those with differing sexual preferences. This discourse may contribute to The United Methodist Church's ability to provide other denominations and/or institutions with a model of racial reconciliation and other forms of reconciliation.

APPROVED IRB

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality of the subjects. The content from audio recordings will be transcribed and the audio recording will be deleted. Prior to the transcription and deletion, the audio recording will be stored on a recording device that is protected by password. Paper information collected for this study (e.g. consent forms and transcribed statements) will be stored in a locked safety box.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Otto D. Harris III.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPROVED IRB

JUN 11 2013

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT CORRESPONDENCES

United and United Methodists: Transforming Social Relations within The United Methodist Church and beyond through Liberation and Reconciliation

E-mail Recruitment for Pastors

Greetings Fellow Pastor,

I am a fellow pastor in the Western North Carolina Conference. I am also a Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am doing research for my dissertation and would like to include your perspectives.

I am contacting pastors in the Western North Carolina Conference whose congregations are actively involved in multi-ethnic and/or multi-cultural ministry. This study will explore how principles of liberation and reconciliation theology can complement Wesleyan theology to provide an approach that will contribute to a United Methodist Church that is alive and engaged in social transformation, particularly concerning race relations. This study will analyze the current racial conditions in The United Methodist Church within contemporary U.S. society.

Will you allow me to conduct an interview with you about your ministry? If so, I will be in your area on [dates]/[times]. Please reply to this e-mail or call me at (336) 580-2338 with the date and time that works best for your schedule.

Thank you for your service and, in advance, for your willingness to share.

Sincerely,

Otto D. Harris III

APPROVED IRB

JUN 11 2013

E-mail Recruitment for Congregants

Greetings [Name],

I am a pastor in the Western North Carolina Conference and a Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am doing research for my dissertation and would like to include your perspectives.

I am contacting congregants in the Western North Carolina Conference whose congregations are actively involved in multi-ethnic and/or multi-cultural ministry. This study will explore how principles of liberation and reconciliation theology can complement Wesleyan theology to provide an approach that will contribute to a United Methodist Church that is alive and engaged in social transformation, particularly concerning race relations. This study will analyze the current racial conditions in The United Methodist Church within contemporary U.S. society.

Will you allow me to conduct an interview with you about your ministry? If so, I will be in your area on [dates]/[times]. Please reply to this e-mail or call me at (336) 580-2338 with the date and time that works best for your schedule.

Thank you for your service and, in advance, for your willingness to share.

Sincerely,

Otto D. Harris III

APPENDIX E

SAME-GENDER EROTICISM ONLINE FORUMS

From Gilbert, 2013, September 23

1. [cyfever](#) September 23, 2013 at 2:01 pm (UTC -6)

The United Methodist Church is in decline. We are no longer following Christ's rules, but we are following our own biased prejudicial laws the the archaic Book of Discipline.

May be follow Pope Francis!!! IT IS NOT OURS TO JUDGE

1. *giff* September 25, 2013 at 5:53 pm (UTC -6)

Two questions: Shouldn't all Pastors follow the Bible, and not their hearts?
What would the Pastor do if his daughter fell in love with a donkey?

2. *George Babbitt* September 23, 2013 at 2:30 pm (UTC -6)

It would be a miracle if the UMC did the right thing and defrocked this guy.

1. [Charles Spickard](#) September 24, 2013 at 9:35 am (UTC -6)

AMEN !!!

1. [John J. Shaffer](#) September 24, 2013 at 10:56 am (UTC -6)

No, the miracle will be when the United Methodist Church does the right thing and includes people that some want to exclude.

Fortunately, we have a model: United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church. We will catch up eventually.

1. [Donnie](#) September 24, 2013 at 2:08 pm (UTC -6)

All of those churches have lost more members than the UMC.

But, yes, if the UMC continues the path of Schaefer, we will definitely “catch up” with those denominations.

1. [John J. Shaffer](#) September 24, 2013 at 2:32 pm (UTC -6)

The question of losing members is an interesting one. If the heterosexuals would get busy and have more children, we might be able to turn it around. Don't blame the homosexuals for the lack of children in the United Methodist Church.

Those who study these sort of things suggest that the younger generation is turned off by the rejection of their homosexual friends.

But the bottom line is that size is not the biggest issue. The biggest issue is being faithful to the vision set out by Jesus.

And I have become convinced that “following Jesus” is more important than “holding the correct belief system or theology” and that is where you see the clash. Some are calling for us to get our doctrine right and all will be well. The problem is, people with the right doctrine are not following Jesus. And it started right away in the first few centuries of the church. Jesus included women in his circle and it didn't take long for the men to exclude women from leadership. We have been on the wrong path for a long, long time. Studying the first five centuries of Christianity is very interesting. Even more interesting that the zig zag to fundamentalism in the 18th and 19th and 20th and 21st century.

2. [Charles Spickard](#) September 24, 2013 at 3:32 pm (UTC -6)

Shall we also include Satan in our ministries?

1. [John J. Shaffer](#) September 24, 2013 at 3:38 pm (UTC -6)

Certainly.

Don't you think God loves Satan? I must strive to be just like God.

Human fathers (at their best) love disobedient children. Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son just to make that point. God is surely as gracious (and loving) as the best human father.

One of my nephews was disobedient and I noted that my brother loved him just the same.

2. [Charles Spickard](#) September 24, 2013 at 4:28 pm (UTC -6)

In other words then, Satan should be a bishop in the United Methodist Church because God "loves" him?

3. [John J. Shaffer](#) September 24, 2013 at 4:41 pm (UTC -6)

Or Satan could be posting on this system, trying to spread confusion and making ridiculous statements. "If the shoe fits, wear it."

It could happen, as I don't see much evidence of a graceful God in some of these posts.

4. [Charles Spickard](#) September 24, 2013 at 5:47 pm (UTC -6)

Don't forget that even though God is graceful, He is also Judgemental. I believe Jesus commanded many to go and SIN no more.

3. *Rev. Lyle M. Miller, Sr.* September 23, 2013 at 2:43 pm (UTC -6)

I am truly sorry that it has come down to the whole idea that somehow our book of Discipline is archaic. I cannot say that anyone knows the real truth about people who are gay, but I do know that it is quite clear from the very beginning account in the Bible of God's creation that God didn't create two men to engage in sex with each other or two women to have sexual relations with each other. The act of engaging in sexual acts with people of the same sex is and has been outside of the normal plan of God from the dawn of creation, otherwise God would not have ordered the human species to be fruitful and multiply. now, I believe it is important to recognize that engaging in sexual acts with someone of the same sex is a sin, I believe it is safe to say that we will never know why someone is gay but just because they are attracted to someone of the same sex, doesn't mean that they have to act on their attractions anymore than we will ever know why a heterosexual person may be attracted to another man's wife or husband. to be sure if he or she acts upon that attraction they would be taken to task for their sin and none of the liberal and so called progressives in the church would complain. However on second thought, I know of a clergy person years ago who preached that extra marital sex wasn't a sin so long as everyone agreed and went on to divorce his wife and have the unmarried organist move into the parsonage with him for over a year with the congregation's blessings,. The bottom line is that sin is sin and when people engage in action that doesn't line up with how God initially intended it, it cannot be called by any other name. We seem to forget in these time that it is the human species that have messed up creation from the very beginning and now we have some who want to say that it is all part of the natural progression of things from one generation to another. I don't agree and until we return to the calling of the church in the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world we will continue to slide down a slippery slope tow a world controlled by the devil.

1. [David](#) September 24, 2013 at 1:50 pm (UTC -6)

Rev. Miller and to those of similar mind set : I respectfully point out that NO WHERE in the Bible does JESUS say a single word about homosexuality, or same sex marriage. It is the men (apostles and others) who have opined that such is immoral or against God's teachings. So it is MAN who has made this determination and now other MEN are taking a contrary position. Jesus loved everyone regardless of race, creed or sexuality and it is time that those who call themselves Christians follow Jesus' teachings and not rely upon

those of other mortal men to direct what is and is not moral and upright. Who are you or they to judge what is and is not right? Who taught you to hate? Who said it was a sin? Not Jesus!!

Love is love regardless of gender and so long as it is a committed relationship , then it builds a better community and a better family (yes gay couples are fine parents too)!!

As for that “slippery slope”, it is you who are travelling down it foolishly relying upon the word of mortal men and not upon the word of GOD or the teachings of his son!!

May God bless your very mortal (and ill read) souls.

1. *Paul* September 24, 2013 at 5:14 pm (UTC -6)

David, You claim Rev. Miller’s beliefs are not from God. So, where are your beliefs from? Also, who do you think inspired the “men” that wrote the bible? (1 Timothy anyone?)

2. *Robin McGahee* September 24, 2013 at 6:26 pm (UTC -6)

I am not a member of the Methodist clergy, I am not even a very good practicing Methodist, and, David, I don’t know you from Adam’s house cat but I have to say your words are a true reflection of all the “red text” in the New Testament – the words of Christ. Love — God is love, Jesus is love, the Holy Spirit is love; we are His creation and an earthly extension of His love and adopted siblings of our Savior; every cell in our bodies is love and through love we have a direct contact with our Creator (like a 220 line to an electric oven) every second of every day. As we mature in our growth, being more and more Christ-like, we will love more and judge less. We are here to love and serve ...

God’s Word has been given to us but how many hands have removed, revised, lost, destroyed or fumbled their interpretation ... we are love, we are not judges, we know what sin is because God gave us His Law ... we know what love is because He gave us Jesus.

Our love gives us peace, our obedience gives us peace, following the example of Christ gives us peace and brings us closer to God ... we were all told to come to Christ as little children, innocent and full of love. I don't know how I feel about same sex marriage but I do know that, when I was asked to stand up with one of my dearest friends in New Hampshire several years ago for his same sex marriage, I initially thought I was too good of a Christian to accept — this nauseated me. But when I accepted out of pure love for both of these men, I was filled with peace and a bigger love than I have ever felt. To this day, there are no regrets.

With that said, I honor God's word and the "red text"; blessings and prayers to all of you as you make decisions about these servants. Be mindful of the stones you cast — how you judge, you will be judged.

1. *David* September 24, 2013 at 7:18 pm (UTC -6)

Well said Robin, God Bless you for your love and true Christianity.

2. *Heather E. Klason* September 25, 2013 at 8:38 am (UTC -6)

Well said – thank you very much! While we fuss and fight over these matters rather than those who live food and shelter insecure, live in fear from violence and war, have never known someone loved them and heard a kind, affirming word, we are displaying to the world a denial of the teachings of Jesus. When will we learn ...

3. *ryan* September 26, 2013 at 9:17 am (UTC -6)

Of course David, you are saying that Jesus didn't say a word about homosexuality. And while it may be true that Jesus never used the word homosexual, or homosexuality, it would be disingenuous to claim that Jesus didn't say anything about sexuality or sexual morals. Jesus didn't say a single word about internet pornography, but that doesn't mean that Jesus didn't teach us principles that would apply to

coming to the conclusion that internet pornography is bad.

I would point you to Jesus teaching with regards to marriage in Matthew 19 (also in Mark 10). Jesus clearly reiterates, quotes even that marriage is between one man and one woman as Genesis states. Jesus very clearly states that this is God's intention for relationship and for sexuality. He even mentions their coming together as one flesh in sexual expression.

Jesus actually mentions that divorce isn't God's intention either. That it exists as a result of our sin and the hardness of our own hearts. Even when it is 'lawful' it is because someone has committed the sin of adultery.

He then goes on to mention eunuchs and those who renounce marriage. The interesting thing is that the clear implication here is those who have renounced sexual expressions. This would apply to people like Paul, who for the sake of God's Kingdom remained celibate.

All this to say Jesus' clear teaching on sexuality is what we echo in our BOD. Celibacy in singleness, fidelity in marriage between one man and one woman. Jesus does not, nor could he touch on every form of immorality, but He instead teaches on God's intention.

Everything outside of that intention is sinful.

And yes, I would state we are all broken people. We are all broken sexually and we are all guilty of sexual sin. That doesn't mean it isn't sin though. It means we should love and encourage each other.

Denying our sinfulness is not loving nor encouraging.

4. *Jonathon Edwards* September 23, 2013 at 2:50 pm (UTC -6)

cyfever – where do you get that the laws in the Book of discipline are not Christ's rules? How sad when a few people in the church wish to do things to suit their own agenda. As always, they can leave the UM Church and find another denomination that will open their arms and let them join so they can continue their sinful ways. How easy it is for someone to say "I followed my heart and felt it was the right thing to do" – Christ loves the sinner but hates the sin (whatever the sin, not just homosexuality). Go and sin no more means just that. So if they continue to live their

sinful ways, I really doubt their conversion to Christ and if they even were a follower of Christ.

1. [*Charles Spickard*](#) September 24, 2013 at 9:33 am (UTC -6)

Jonathan, that is the most meaningful post I have read yet.

5. [*John J. Shaffer*](#) September 23, 2013 at 2:50 pm (UTC -6)

It would be even more of a miracle if the UMC did the right thing and affirmed ministry to all persons, just as Jesus did. Of course, there were those who were critical when Jesus ministered to lepers. In fact, people who think like the person who urged “defrocking” are very prominent in New Testament writings. Follow the rules! Don’t heal on the Sabbath. Don’t meet human need when you are in a hurry to be “religious”, just pass by on the other side. Ah, rich biblical images comes to mind, as well as the character in a prominent novel who was also named Babbitt.

1. *Rev. Lyle M. Miller, Sr.* September 25, 2013 at 1:46 pm (UTC -6)

There is and should be no question, John that we should continue to affirm all people as children of God and minister to them regardless of their sin on so called ‘non sin’ by so many in the church today. Let’s not forget that at the last General Conference the majority of delegates voted to keep the discipline in tact on this matter and the margin of victory for those who support Scriptural Holiness which requires that we reach out to all in a ministry of love not a ministry of condemnation, but that doesn’t mean that we put our heads in the sand on matters of sin, regardless. Same sex, sexual activity is no greater sin than those I commit when I pray for a wild driver to be pulled over by the authorities and taken off the road, especially when I have a heart of ill will if only for the moment. It’s at those times that I like anyone else need to ask for forgiveness and remember that in order for me to be forgiven I need to forgive others.

1. [*John J. Shaffer*](#) September 25, 2013 at 3:00 pm (UTC -6)

Over the centuries General Conference has voted for or not voted for lots of things that were out and out wrong. So I am not impressed by

the last General Conference vote which was clearly manipulated by out and out bribes, for one thing. (I was there, by the way.)

And General Conference apologized for some (United) Methodist actions of decades ago. And some day General Conference will apologize for the marginalizing of homosexual persons in today's church. And you and I will be dead by that time.

And then there are the racial attitudes of United Methodists...

From Hahn, 2011, June 23

1. [jimextwi](#) June 23, 2011 at 7:46 pm (UTC -6)

and we ask why the church is loosing members.

We have a set of rules that must be followed and apparently these folks who have been charged with upholding the standards have failed to read and follow the rules. This is why we as a church are getting lost when we can not even follow our own rules as well as letting folks with a humanist bent into leadership positions.

2. [~Dorothy](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:09 pm (UTC -6)

On the contrary, the church has lost members because we have had leaders focused on the human construct of the BoD. This decision proves we are finally blessed to have leaders who hold God's law and love above all humanist doctrine.

3. [John](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:10 pm (UTC -6)

Such lack of integrity. The good shepherd self-sacrificially lays down his life for his sheep. Others claim to "be called" to be Christian shepherds and then selfishly demand that the entire church lay down its life for their own refusal to exercise some basic self-control in their desire for physical gratification.

4. [John](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:12 pm (UTC -6)

Dorothy, with all due respect, you are NOT God. But that is essentially the authority that you (and for that matter, DeLong) are claiming for yourself when you glibly dismiss God's Word clearly revealed in Scripture and subordinate it to your own personal opinions.

5. [bepraying](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:21 pm (UTC -6)

Wow, she even admitted to being a practicing homosexual and was acquitted. What would someone have to do to be convicted ? The 2012 General Conference will likely be a defining moment in United Methodist history. Pray daily.

6. [Alice](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:29 pm (UTC -6)

We do not welcome the alcoholic to church by handing him a beer, the prostitute cannot bring her appointment book....and the homosexual cannot practice perversion. If the Methodist faith caves in to the homosexual pressure I will resign as laity and leave the faith.

7. [~Dorothy](#) June 23, 2011 at 8:56 pm (UTC -6)

John, you are quite correct, I am not God, nor are you. I do not presume to question any person's relationship with their Creator. As I have said in other comments, God has welcomed us all to the table of Grace. Any person or institution who tries to stand between others and their God-given place at that table is missing the opportunity to experience the fullness of that relationship, and I feel very sorry for them.

8. [Dean Snyder](#) June 23, 2011 at 9:29 pm (UTC -6)

I'm betting that God isn't threatened by all this. I imagine the holocaust was hard for God but I suspect God can handle us recognizing that we shouldn't punish people for being gay.

9. [Bob Brooke](#) June 23, 2011 at 10:15 pm (UTC -6)

What we are being asked to do by the gay christian movement in the current debate is to take a certain part of our life – our sexuality – and say in effect, "I'll be the

master of my domain. I will tell God what is right for my life and the lives of my friends to make our lives happy.”

10. [Pastor Dirk](#) June 23, 2011 at 10:26 pm (UTC -6)

The sad fact of the matter is that we are losing members because our members are aging and dying, and young people are looking at our church as hypocritical, unchristian and judgmental. (Check out the book unchristian, published not by a left-wing organization, but by the barna group). And the only “pressure” is the pressure to practice the open hearts, open minds, and open doors we so glibly proclaim as our slogan.

11. [DCKJJ](#) June 23, 2011 at 10:31 pm (UTC -6)

I am feeling deep gratitude for the 13 jurors who spent nearly 7 hours struggling to come up with a just penalty. It could not have been an easy task for persons who clearly love both the UMC and their sister-in Christ Amy. Blessings on them.

12. [KDLB](#) June 24, 2011 at 12:32 am (UTC -6)

As a young clergy in the UMC, I'm excited about what God is doing here and now. The judgmental sentiment of the olden days will soon pass, however we must continue to listen carefully to one another and listen to the Holy Spirit's leading as the church is challenged to determine what God is saying to us in this present moment.

13. [Maria Briscese](#) June 24, 2011 at 6:38 am (UTC -6)

Jesus was silent on this issue. I have my own theory as to why. Jesus would not openly contradict the old testament. If you look at the life that Jesus lead, and the company He kept, who became His followers, Jesus did not discriminate. He did not exclude anybody. Jesus included those in His inner circle that others in society found repulsive. Jesus teaches us to LOVE one another, as He has loved us. Jesus teaches us to RESPECT one another. Jesus would NEVER turn anyone away who wanted to follow Him. Jesus made room at His table for everyone. Who are we to judge others? Who are we to turn anyone away from The Church? Who are we to not open our hearts to those who profess their love of Jesus and not welcome them in to our fold? Jesus wouldn't turn anyone away, neither should we or our Church.

14. [Barb](#) June 24, 2011 at 7:20 am (UTC -6)

Maria-very well put. Do not judge others lest you be judged yourself.

15. [Juliann](#) June 24, 2011 at 8:12 am (UTC -6)

If one looks closely at the report she is to write it is tantamount to persecuted Christians who were asked to denounce their faith by Romans and the Pharisees. The "institutional church" is allowing Amy to call herself anything she wants while forcing her to document in writing that she is wrong according to the BOD. I doubt that Amy will be allowed to use scriptural verses to support her position, rather she will be urged by the committee to use the scripture to support theirs. All this said, I am thankful Amy is being "allowed by man" to continue within the "confines" of the UMC while evangelizing Christ's complete message to all who would have ears to hear.

What Would Jesus Do? What Would Jesus Say? Amy had done it and said it eloquently. May God Continue to Bless Your Witness Amy.

16. [Mr. Beaver](#) June 24, 2011 at 8:37 am (UTC -6)

@ Maria and Barb.

OK. So if is not written in red you discard it? You must have a very small Bible.

17. [Michael](#) June 24, 2011 at 9:46 am (UTC -6)

The issue at hand is not whether DeLong followed her conscience or chose to do what is right or wrong for those she performed the ceremony for. The issue is that of covenant. DeLong agreed to covenant with those in the United Methodist Church according to what those in the UMC believed, choosing voluntarily to abide by the Discipline as an ecclesiastical rule. She broke that covenant by her actions, choosing instead to put herself at odds with those she claimed to agree with.

DeLong's personal beliefs are not the issue. I, like any number of other pastors, disagree with some of the language of the Discipline. But I agreed to abide by it when I agreed to accept an appointment as pastor. DeLong made the same covenant and chose to break it. Her reasons are irrelevant. She made a promise and then chose not to keep it.

If you don't like the language of the Discipline on this or any other matter, work to change it don't blatantly break your word and expect others to applaud it.

Unfortunately, our system of ecclesiastical governance creates part of this problem with the appointment system as it is. People who want to be guaranteed of a 'position' in a church are willing to make the church a career instead of a calling, trading their conscience for a place to work. Whether DeLong did this or not I can not say but I can say that appointments should be a matter of God using the pastor and seeing fruit from the ministry not political games and jockeying.

This like many other issues at hand may be the beginning of major changes in the UMC. I pray that God will work in the hearts of all involved with grace and peace.

18. [Rev. Bill McBride](#) June 24, 2011 at 10:12 am (UTC -6)

Thanks DCKJJ. As one of the 13 on the "trial court" (jury) I appreciate your gratitude. While we covenanted not to share our deliberations that resulted in the verdict, we did not take our role lightly or easily. You try sitting in a room with 13 colleagues for 7 hours, seeking to bring both justice and reconciliation and bring a document to the floor that will have far reaching implications for a person's life and the church and see how you feel? The penalty was our way to invite a process of restorative justice and invite healing and face to face collaboration and communication over what is unquestionably a divisive issue in the Wisconsin Conference and across the larger church. I speak personally and not for the trial court when I say, this is not nor never should be the time for legalisms, judgement or punitive action. I am guided as a UM Clergy by the highest law of all, to love God and love my neighbor; especially those marginalized by our culture and our laws. It's easy to grab a verse and throw it in another's face or judge them because they are different than we; Christ himself broke the law many a times because he sought to shed the light of God and appeal to love. It is my hope and prayer that Amy and all those named and all of us too will seek the truth, restore wholeness to our brokenness and seek to build up rather than tear down. I find it significant that the trial was conducted at Peace United Methodist Church.

19. [Michael](#) June 24, 2011 at 10:20 am (UTC -6)

“It’s easy to grab a verse and throw it in another’s face or judge them because they are different than we,”

This isn’t the issue Rev. McBride. The issue is covenant. She made one that she broke. Breaking that covenant is an act against the church she chose to serve. If she didn’t like the polity or language of the Discipline, she needed to advocate change in the Discipline itself not seek to create her own version of it.

20. [Rev. Bill McBride](#) June 24, 2011 at 10:58 am (UTC -6)

Consider this Michael: I suspect the Pharisees were seeking to do away with Jesus because he broke their covenant and was confronting their security espoused in their laws too. Christ said and did some things in their presence that was against their “Law” and their ‘Book of Discipline.’ Yet, we still love and adore him and even applaud his actions too. If you read the penalty we imposed on Amy and those named to be in collaboration with her, the goal of the “trial court” was to rebuild covenant, seek to ‘Do no harm’ as Wesley stated and engage in a renewed and new process to prevent clergy trials in the future. Noble and idealistic, possibly; restorative justice and pregnant with promise, indeed. We understood that we can not force anyone to abide by our dictates, but we can seek to bring healing and invite wholeness into our brokenness. Tell me Michael what penalty would you have imposed? You say-”she needed to advocate change in the Discipline itself not seek to create her own version of it.” I know that Amy has been working hard over the years to advocate change in the Discipline. Did not Jesus Christ create a new version of the law in his day by acting and speaking in the manner in which he did? I think he summed all the law of the Pharisees and prophets up in a law called love.

21. [Ginger](#) June 24, 2011 at 12:00 pm (UTC -6)

Here’s the debate simply put: Is homosexuality still a sin? Yes..Jesus had sinners in his company and loved them, but expected the prostitute to stop her ways. The difference here is...homosexual Christians want to continue to be homosexuals..(not that I believe a person can stop being a homosexual). This is one issue I’m currently up in the air about. I pray that God’s will be done.

22. [Julianne](#) June 24, 2011 at 2:18 pm (UTC -6)

Rev. McBride

I applaud your commitment to both your call and the church. Your words will resonate with a majority of Methodists today. You did what many would find difficult or impossible to do.. arm chair Q-backs not withstanding. Thank you!

Juliann

23. [Rev. Gary Cole](#) June 24, 2011 at 3:22 pm (UTC -6)

jimextwi said...

We have a set of rules that must be followed and apparently these folks who have been charged with upholding the standards have failed to read and follow the rules.

I'm one of the thirteen "these folks" you condemn. I can only speak for myself. I did read the rules; I did follow the presiding bishop's instructions; and I did consider the evidence brought forth by the church counsel and the respondent's counsel. The respondent was convicted of the first charge unanimously because the trial court applied the rule.

bepraying said...

Wow, she even admitted to being a practicing homosexual and was acquitted. What would someone have to do to be convicted?

You are misinformed. She did not avow that she was a practicing homosexual and the church counsel failed to bring the evidence required by the governing judicial council decision for a conviction.

Again, speaking only for myself, the respondent was acquitted not because I did not read the rules, but because I did. The burden of proof set out by the Judicial Council was nowhere close to being met. The charge was so poorly investigated and presented that it should have been clear to the church counsel beforehand that the burden of proof could not be met with the information presented.

The trial court followed the rules and people on all sides did not like the results. If you are unhappy – change the rules.

June 24, 2011 4:10 PM

24. [Jeff Bennett](#) June 24, 2011 at 4:57 pm (UTC -6)

I agree with Michael; it really is a question of the covenant we share as elders in the United Methodist Church. The historic questions we were all asked at our ordination (para 336 in the 2004 Discipline) include questions about our rules and doctrines, whether we believe them to be “in harmony with the Holy Scriptures” and whether we will keep them.

Seeking to change those rules with which you have come to disagree is honorable. To withdraw from our denomination because you now disagree with the rules you once agreed to is honorable; you’re certainly no less a Christian for it. Breaking the rules with which you disagree... this cuts against the covenant we entered into with one another.

This said, I see no reason to think that the jury in the case of the Rev. Amy DeLong was less than faithful in keeping our rules. I certainly don’t envy them the task they were given. At the end of the day I trust that they have been faithful to the covenant we share.

Respectfully...

25. [Rev. Gary Cole](#) June 24, 2011 at 5:30 pm (UTC -6)

Thank you, Jeff. I trust that it is clear from the penalty given that the breaking of the covenant was a concern of the trial court.

26. [Michael](#) June 25, 2011 at 8:44 am (UTC -6)

Thank you for your candor Rev. McBride. I think it will only be through honest and direct dialogue that we might come to an understanding on this or any other subject. I think it best to answer each point individually, so here goes.

The issues with Jesus breaking covenant is moot. To my knowledge, and perhaps I have missed something, Jesus was never a member of any sect, Pharisee or Sadducee. Not being a member of any sect, Jesus could not have broken and covenant with them. In Matthew 5.17, Jesus states “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” The issue with Jesus was not breaking covenant but fulfilling it, so Jesus did break covenant although He did confront the moral and ethical issues of His day in regard

to them.

I applaud the fact that you would like to restore covenant with Ms. DeLong. Our faith certainly espouses the ideals of restoration and redemption as central. But the question becomes, is restoration without repentance truly restoration? According to the UMNS newswire, Ms. DeLong stated, "that she has called herself "a self-avowed practicing homosexual" because that is what The Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book, calls her." She went on to say about her partner, "Val is the love of my life; I can't imagine my life without her," The truth of the matter is that while Ms. DeLong is free to be in this relationship as a human being, she is not free to do so as a practicing member of the UMC clergy. The Discipline is clear on the matter and she either agrees to uphold the Discipline according to her vows or break covenant.

My understanding is that the penalty imposed is a collaborative paper "outlining procedures for clergy in order to help resolve issues that harm the clergy covenant, create an adversarial spirit or lead to future clergy trials." While this is certainly a worthy attempt to redefine for Ms. DeLong her responsibilities in covenant with other clergy of the UMC, I think it is clear she has no intentions of renouncing her lifestyle or her beliefs on the issue. Does she plan on giving up a sixteen year relationship with her partner? Is she going to refuse to perform weddings that she obviously is fighting to have recognized as legitimate? Perhaps but I seriously doubt it. As to my idea of a penalty, Ms. DeLong should be welcome to be restored to the covenant she made with the elders and the United Methodist church if she chooses, abiding by the governance set down in the Discipline or choose to minister in another denomination. The issue at hand is complicated and how we as a church address it will have bearing on our ministry and its effectiveness for years to come. I pray that we can do so with grace and mercy, while still holding ourselves to the doctrinal standards we have come to believe.

Jesus did not have to create a new version of the law, He simply clarified it. And yes Jesus advocated that we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and spirit and our neighbor as ourself. But we have twisted this idea of love to the point it is cheapened. The love we are called to not only is unconditional and extravagant but calls us to hold one another accountable as God holds us accountable. Consider Revelation 3.19 where He says, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." In the same way a parent holds a child accountable for their actions, God holds us accountable for ours. And while Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins on the cross, we still have to choose repentance and choose holiness.

27. [Cheesecake Maven](#) June 26, 2011 at 8:26 am (UTC -6)

All of these very silly arguments about whether or not a Methodist clergy can or should marry a homosexual couple will be moot in just one or two more generations. Seriously, our children are beyond this issue, it is simply not something on their radar at all. They accept others, period. What IS on the minds of the young people is the enormous debt and mess we are leaving behind for them to have to somehow pay for with lower wage jobs, fewer jobs, etc. Really folks, this will be a non-issue for our children's generation and for their children's generation. Change the United Methodist Church's outdated covenants, or see more and more enlightened members leave the church, just as we did several years ago. Our morals and ethics could no longer find a home in an organization that discriminated against so many of our close friends and family members. The work of any church should be humanitarian efforts to help feed and support the poor, etc. The work of the church should not be to discriminate against so many loving people.

APPENDIX F

ANNUAL CONFERENCE STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENTS

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
1. Virginia (SE)	“We envision faith communities where all God’s people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world.” — Virginia Conference Vision Statement
2. Western North Carolina (SE)	The vision for United Methodists in the Western NC Conference is growing with new challenges centering on “the Power of 3 for WNCC.” The challenges were have been more clearly defined and enthusiastically embraced by the 2012 Annual Conference with a commitment to earnestly strive toward meeting the building upon the Vision and Goals. Below are links to help fulfill the conference vision to “Follow Jesus. Make Disciples. Transform the World.”
3. North Carolina (SE)	Healthy Congregations and Effective Leaders in Every Place Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.
4. South Carolina (SE)	“The South Carolina United Methodist Conference is a church of diverse congregations called, united and sent by Jesus Christ.”
5. North Georgia (SE)	With a mission to nurture people of faith and aggressively reach seekers of faith,
6. South Georgia (SE)	The Mission of the Church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
7. Florida (SE)	The mission of the Florida Conference is to connect and equip congregations in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Therefore, we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and nurture missional communities of faith • Develop effective servant leaders for the church and the world • Provide services that support congregations and extension ministries • Connect congregations and resources for ministries that we do better together
8. Holston (SE)	Holston Conference Vision Statement <i>God envisions bold, passionate, and joyful communities of faith where the spiritual hunger to worship God and to serve Christ sets disciples on fire</i>

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
	<i>with Spirit-filled, risk-taking love for all God's children until Holston Conference reflects the saving grace and redeeming justice of our Lord Jesus Christ.</i>
9. North Alabama (SE)	The vision of the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church is Every church challenged and equipped to grow more disciples of Jesus Christ by taking risks and changing lives.
10. Alabama-West Florida (SE)	Unable to locate
11. Red Bird Missionary (SE)	Its goal is to minister to the whole person by addressing spiritual, physical, educational and economic needs.
12. Kentucky (SE)	The Kentucky Conference Mission is to provide effective leaders for the development of vital congregations filled with faithful disciples.
13. Tennessee (SE)	As part of the global United Methodist Church, we share in the mission of <i>making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.</i>
14. Memphis (SE)	Unable to locate
15. Mississippi (SE)	<p>Health & Wellness <i>Cultivate clergy and church wellness</i></p> <p>Mission <i>Reach out in mission locally and globally</i> Small Membership Churches <i>Equip and nurture small membership churches</i> Racial Reconciliation <i>Build and strengthen relationships across races and cultures</i> Congregational Development <i>Grow and start vital congregations</i></p>
16. New England (NE)	Our Mission as the New England Conference is to equip, connect, and support local, regional, and global ministries to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve all in his name.
17. New York (NE)	Vision Statement The New York Annual Conference through the grace of God embodies a beloved community of hope, building up a healthy Body of Christ, with heart-warmed United Methodists in mission for the transformation of the world.
18. Upper New York (NE)	<i>Vision:</i> To live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.
19. Greater New Jersey (NE)	"The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples for Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church;

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
	all to the glory of God.” <i>from the 1996 Book of Discipline</i> , ¶ 601
20. Eastern Pennsylvania (NE)	Conference’s mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
21. Peninsula Delaware (NE)	The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church in partnership with our Local Churches covenants to answer our call to: EQUIP Jesus followers to become radical, passionate, intentional, risk-taking, extravagant disciples of God’s love, and CHALLENGE all people to become servants who wash their neighbor’s feet no matter where their neighbors walk, so that lives may be TRANSFORMED through Christ.
22. Baltimore-Washington (NE)	Call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders to make disciples and grow Acts 2 congregations.
23. Susquehanna (NE)	To effectively equip our local churches to fulfill their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ in order to transform the world by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and deploying spiritual transformational leaders; • Equipping our local churches with effective tools and resources to assist them in their disciple-making mission; • And, to lift up God’s gift of “connectionalism” at all levels of the church to empower our transformational work.
24. Western Pennsylvania (NE)	Our mission is to provide leadership, connection and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
25. West Virginia (NE)	We envision all people on a journey of Christ-like holiness. As a holy people we belong to, are filled by, and serve God. Living in this vision will equip us to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
26. Detroit (NC)	The vision of the Detroit Conference of The United Methodist Church is to create and nurture dynamic and fruitful congregations who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
27. West Michigan (NC)	The purpose of the West Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church is to create Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
28. East Ohio (NC)	Unable to locate
29. West Ohio (NC)	To identify, equip and empower spiritual leaders for local churches.
30. Indiana (NC)	Our Mission: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
31. Illinois Great Rivers (NC)	Unable to locate
32. Northern Illinois (NC)	Unable to locate
33. Wisconsin (NC)	Unable to locate

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
34. Iowa (NC)	Unable to locate
35. Minnesota (NC)	<p>The purpose of United Methodist annual conferences is to make disciples for Jesus Christ by equipping their local congregations for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God. The Minnesota Annual Conference leads in this through what it identifies as its “Gospel Imperatives”: Reach New People (the Great Commission, Matt. 28:19-20) and Cultivate Spiritual Vitality (the Great Commandment, Matt. 22:37-40).</p> <p>Starting new United Methodist faith communities and helping existing congregations reach out to their mission fields and are the two primary ways that the conference helps churches to reach new people.</p> <p>Connecting churches to the ministries and resources of the United Methodist Church, and enabling them to support these ministries, are among the ways that the annual conference provides a connection for ministry beyond the local church.</p>
36. Dakotas (NC)	Unable to locate
37. Nebraska (SC)	Unable to locate
38. Kansas West (SC)	“As we make disciples of Jesus Christ, the Kansas West Conference calls God’s people to invite through radical hospitality, excite for intentional faith-sharing and unite in risk-taking mission for the transformation of the world.” – Kansas West Conference vision adopted May 2008
39. Kansas East (SC)	The Kansas East Conference’s mission is to connect and empower people and churches in living out the Gospel’s call to invite, nurture, equip and send forth disciples of Jesus Christ.
40. Missouri (SC)	The mission of the Missouri Annual Conference is: Leading congregations to lead people to actively follow Jesus Christ
41. Arkansas (SC)	To make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.
42. Louisiana (SC)	<p>The Mission of the Louisiana Conference of The United Methodist Church is “To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.” In order to accomplish our mission we seek to “Raise up Spiritual Leaders, both Lay and Clergy.”</p> <p>The mission is based on the teachings of Christ and our Judeo Christian heritage. Our theology holds that our salvation and that of the world is given only through the grace of God through Christ. Good works done by us are not the cause of righteousness (meaning that we and the world are as God created us to be), but rather good works are the result of God’s grace, freely given. We seek to invite all persons to receive Christ and the Good News he embodied in order to be made whole in spirit and in love with God and one another.</p> <p>The United Methodist Church seeks to be a change agent in the world. We do not withdraw</p>

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
	from the world, but rather we participate as leaven in the world to infuse the love of God through Christ as the ideal relationship between God and individuals and between one another. We are on a pilgrimage to be the Church of "Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Doors."
43. Oklahoma (SC)	Unable to locate
44. North Texas (SC)	Unable to locate
45. Central Texas (SC)	To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
46. Texas (SC)	Equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.
47. Southwest Texas (SC)	Unable to locate
48. Northwest Texas (SC)	The mission of the NWTX Conference is to make disciples for Jesus Christ by equipping local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.
49. New Mexico (SC)	this Conference is dedicated to the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
50. Oklahoma Indian Missionary (SC)	To create a fuller awareness of each person's role in mission as a participating member of God's Church; To enable the people of our Conference to live a life that proclaims the gospel of our Lord Jesus; To affirm our cultures and witness to God's grace through our native languages, hymns, and traditions; To experience an abundant life in the body of Christ through education, communication and participation and acceptance of responsibility; To respond to life experience with care for every age-level to share God's love; To provide opportunities for the preaching of the Scriptures, teaching our congregations the mission of the church, and reaching within and beyond the local church; and To plan for the future with vision, purpose and commitment.
51. Rio Grande (SC)	In response to our covenant with God and each other, the mission of the Rio Grande Conference is to lead persons, particularly the growing Hispanic population living in the boundaries of the states of Texas and New Mexico, to become disciples of Jesus Christ committed to serve and transform the communities of which we are a part, that God's kingdom may be realized more fully.
52. Alaska Missionary (W)	Five Top Priorities: 1. Stewardship 2. Revitalization of Churches

Annual Conference	Statement of Commitments
	3. New Church Development 4. Native Outreach 5. Youth and Young Adults
53. Pacific Northwest (W)	The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church is called to be a community, diverse and united in God's saving love, sent out in vital life-giving ministry for and with Jesus Christ.
54. Yellowstone (W)	"We send leaders to serve disciples who offer the gospel to the world." Yellowstone Conference Mission Statement
55. Oregon-Idaho (W)	The Mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World. The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference, as a regional body of the body of the church, subscribes to this mission and works to carry it out through the churches, programs and ministries of the conference. To fulfill that mission the Annual Conference leadership is working toward a vision
56. Rocky Mountain (W)	Unable to Locate
57. California-Nevada (W)	Unable to locate
58. Desert Southwest (W)	A Strategic Direction for the Desert Southwest Conference We believe God is calling us to participate in the transformation of the world through Jesus, thus, we commit to Making Disciples of Jesus Christ.
59. California-Pacific (W)	Conference Mission: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

APPENDIX G

ANNUAL CONFERENCES STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENTS SUMMARY

Annual Conference	Nurture	Transform	World	Make Disciples	Diverse	Poverty	Comments
Virginia (SE)	X	X	X		X		
Western North Carolina (SE)		X	X	X			
North Carolina (SE)		X	X	X			
South Carolina (SE)					X		
North Georgia (SE)	X			X			
South Georgia (SE)		X	X	X			
Florida (SE)	X	X	X	X			
Holston (SE)					X		
North Alabama (SE)				X			
Alabama-West Florida (SE)	Unable to Locate						
Red Bird Missionary (SE)						X	Missionary
Kentucky (SE)				X			
Tennessee (SE)		X	X	X			
Memphis (SE)	Unable to Locate						
Mississippi (SE)	X				X		Priorities Statement
New England (NE)				X			
New York (NE)		X	X				
Upper New York (NE)							
Greater New Jersey (NE)				X			
Eastern Pennsylvania (NE)		X	X	X			
Peninsula Delaware (NE)		X		X			
Baltimore-Washington				X			

Annual Conference	Nurture	Transform	World	Make Disciples	Diverse	Poverty	Comments
(NE)							
Susquehanna (NE)		X	X	X			
Western Pennsylvania (NE)		X	X	X			
West Virginia (NE)		X	X	X			
Detroit (NC)	X	X	X	X			
West Michigan (NC)		X	X	X			
East Ohio (NC)	Unable to Locate						
West Ohio (NC)							
Indiana (NC)	X	X	X				
Illinois Great River (NC)	Unable to Locate						
Northern Illinois (NC)	Unable to Locate						
Wisconsin (NC)	Unable to Locate						
Iowa (NC)	Unable to Locate						
Minnesota (NC)			X				
Dakotas (SC)	Unable to Locate						
Nebraska (SC)	Unable to Locate						
Kansas West (SC)	X	X	X				
Kansas East (SC)			X				
Missouri (SC)	X						
Arkansas (SC)	X	X	X				
Louisiana (SC)							
Oklahoma (SC)	X	X	X	X			
North Texas (SC)	Unable to Locate						
Central Texas (SC)	X	X	X	X			
Texas (SC)	X	X	X				
Southwest Texas (SC)	Unable to Locate						
Northwest Texas (SC)			X				
New Mexico (SC)	X	X	X				
Oklahoma Indian Missionary (SC)				X			Missionary
Rio Grande (SC)	X		X				
Alaska Missionary (W)							Missionary/ Priorities Statement

Annual Conference	Nurture	Transform	World	Make Disciples	Diverse	Poverty	Comments
Pacific Northwest (W)				X			
Yellowstone (W)		X	X				
Oregon-Idaho (W)	X	X	X				
Rocky Mountain (W)	Unable to Locate						
California-Nevada (W)	Unable to Locate						
Desert Southwest (W)	X	X	X			Strategic Direction Statement	
California-Pacific (W)	X	X	X				

APPENDIX H

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENTS

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
1. *Boston University School of Theology	<p>The purpose of the Boston University School of Theology is to pursue knowledge of God, to cultivate leaders for communities of faith, to enrich the academy, and to seek peace with justice in a diverse and interconnected world.</p> <p>As the founding school of Boston University and the oldest United Methodist seminary in North America, we are a professional school within a cosmopolitan research university that is itself committed to “learning, virtue, and piety.” Rooted in the Wesleyan traditions and drawing from the wider Christian traditions of the world, we strive to equip women and men for ministries and vocations that foster personal and social transformation, that are oriented to the world’s diversities, and that expand the prophetic legacy of this historic School of Theology.</p>
2. *Candler School of Theology Emory University	<p>Our mission is to educate—through scholarship, teaching, and service—faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries in the world. One of 13 seminaries of The United Methodist Church, we are grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concern</p>
3. *Claremont School of Theology	<p>Claremont School of Theology is United Methodist in origin and affiliation and ecumenical in spirit. Students are nurtured by Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason and are prepared for lives of Christian ministry, leadership, and service. Graduates are prepared to become agents of transformation and healing in churches, local communities, schools, non-profit institutions, and the world at large. A founding member of Claremont Lincoln University, CST also equips students to pursue peaceful coexistence and collaboration with other cultures and religions.</p>
4. *Drew University Theological School	<p>Drew Theological School empowers leadership for a global Christianity of justice, ecumenism, and the integrity of creation. Its pastoral, spiritual, and conceptual disciplines grow within an intimate liturgical and communal context, one that sustains multiple relations of difference. Through its particular historical commitments to African, Asian, African-American, Hispanic, and women’s ministries, the Theological School remains faithfully rooted in its Methodist heritage. Drew nurtures Christian practices through vital partnership with local churches and international networks of education. Trans-disciplinary</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	interpretation of text, tradition, and experience energizes its scholarly rigor. Drew engenders theologies responsible to the complex social realities of an interconnected world. Into that world Drew sends pastors, preachers and prophets, deacons, activists, and teachers
5. *Duke Divinity School	<p>Duke Divinity School's mission is to engage in spiritually disciplined and academically rigorous education in service and witness to the Triune God in the midst of the church, the academy, and the world. We strive to cultivate a vibrant community through theological education on Scripture, engagement with the living Christian tradition, and attention to and reflection on contemporary contexts in order to form leaders for faithful Christian ministries. "Transforming Ministry" was adopted by Duke Divinity School during the 75th anniversary in 2001-02 and continues to serve as a major theme.</p> <p>Transformation includes an appreciation of the past as well as a focus on the future. We seek to embody a vital sense of tradition without lapsing into traditionalism. Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan summarizes the distinction succinctly: 'Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.'</p> <p>Transformation also describes what we need as a school: being open to the transformation of our curriculum, our programs, our efforts to learn from the best practices of ministry, and to deepen our understanding so that we may be of more faithful service to the church, to the academy, and to the world."</p>
6. *Gammon Theological Seminary	The Mission of Gammon Theological Seminary, a historically African American institution, in partnership with The Interdenominational Theological Center, is to recruit, support, and educate pastors and leaders for The United Methodist Church.
7. *Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary	<p>Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is a graduate theological school that prepares skilled, bold and articulate leaders who share the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Related to the United Methodist Church, with an ecumenical and international reach, we prepare leaders who are equipped to live and proclaim the Gospel and to teach in diverse congregations and educational settings. Our teaching and learning settings will be places of hospitality where we pursue respect and reconciliation in all encounters.</p>
8. *Iliff School of Theology	<p>The Iliff School of Theology is a graduate theological school related to the United Methodist Church. Its central mission is the education of persons for effective ministry in Christian churches and other religious communities, for academic leadership, and for the cultivation of justice and peace in local and global contexts.</p> <p>Iliff affirms its United Methodist identity and its liberal Christian heritage, grounded in scriptures and traditions, critical thinking, and openness to emerging truths, including those</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>derived from science, experience, and other faith traditions. In a world fragmented by religious and ideological conflicts, Iliff promotes theological scholarship and dialogue to foster transformative possibilities for humanity and nature. Change the world.</p> <p>In the pursuit of this mission, Iliff strives to be academically excellent, spiritually vital, and socially transformative. Iliff seeks to prepare students for effective ministry through the integration of theory and practice.</p> <p>Iliff plays a unique educational role in the vast Western region of the United States. Iliff is committed to being ecumenical, interfaith and globally conscious in the best United Methodist tradition.</p> <p>Iliff collaborates with the University of Denver, linked by historic ties and current programs. Iliff celebrates its ties with other historic members of the Methodist denominational family, especially those of African-American heritage.</p> <p>Iliff hosts a program in Anglican Studies and promotes institutional relationships with many other denominations and religious communities.</p> <p>Iliff serves a broad student constituency, representing more than 30 faith traditions and cultures, and continually seeks to broaden this constituency.</p> <p>Iliff provides theological resources for wider publics beyond its student body through non-degree programs and community outreach.</p> <p>Iliff is committed to modeling the values it embraces: diversity, mutual respect, accountability, honest communication, critical self-reflection, curiosity, creativity and a sense of adventure.</p>
9. *Methodist Theological School in Ohio	<p>Our Aspiration In response to the grace and call of God in Jesus Christ, Methodist Theological School in Ohio will prepare and invigorate transformational leaders to engage the church and the world in leadership and service.</p> <p>Our Identity and Purpose Methodist Theological School in Ohio is a center for rigorous theological inquiry, spiritual formation and professional development rooted in the scriptures and traditions of the Christian faith. We provide a vibrant learning environment for the preparation of skilled, passionate transformational leaders for churches, religious institutions, emerging faith communities and the wider world. Grounded in our Wesleyan tradition and influenced by our ecumenical and interfaith commitments, we attend to the theological, spiritual and vocational formation of a diverse group of students involved in a wide range of pursuits.</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>Expecting active participation in our community of learning, we maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness, teaching how to engage in conversation with the past and with others so that new and faithful perspectives may emerge. We strive for our graduates to demonstrate a deep understanding of the heritage disciplines of religious study, to be highly competent in areas of practical theology, and to show evidence of thoughtful reflection. We are committed to individual wholeness, social justice, inclusiveness and religious diversity.</p> <p>We take seriously our responsibility for stewardship of the intellectual life of the church and our commitment to a just and sustainable world.</p>
10. *Perkins School of Theology	<p>The primary mission of Perkins School of Theology, as a community devoted to theological study and teaching in the service of the church of Jesus Christ, is to prepare women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry.</p> <p>Perkins School of Theology affirms its relationships to the community of learning that is Southern Methodist University, to the universal church (inclusive, ecumenical, and global), The United Methodist Church specifically, and to its particular geographical and cultural setting in the southwestern United States.</p> <p>These relationships are sources of strength and avenues of service for the school as it pursues its twin tasks of theological reflection and theological education to the glory of God.</p>
11. *Saint Paul School of Theology	<p>Our Mission Rooted in the Wesleyan tradition and committed to inspiring passion for ministry in diverse Christian bodies,</p> <p>Saint Paul School of Theology educates leaders to make disciples for Jesus Christ, renew the church, and transform the world.</p>
12. *United Theological Seminary	<p>At United Theological Seminary we have one goal: to educate dynamic, Spirit-led leaders who will renew the church for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. We are committed to teaching the Bible</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	and the historic Christian faith, instilling a passion for personal and social holiness, and renewing the Church for its ministry and mission.
13. *Wesley Theological Seminary	<p>Ministry Statement</p> <p>Wesley is a graduate theological school of The United Methodist Church and a member of the Washington Theological Consortium, and theological education at Wesley reflects our joint commitments to our Methodist heritage and to the ecumenical movement. At the beginning of the 21st century, Wesley Theological Seminary embraces a renewed global vision of ministry, as we learn from the experiences of Christians in other lands. We are open to dialogue with all the world's varied communities, and welcome cooperation with all who work for peace and justice.</p> <p>At Wesley Theological Seminary, we seek to ground learning in the scripture and traditions that provide the church's identity in the gospel, and to prepare students for the practice of ministry. Therefore, every part of the curriculum is theological in character, and practically related to the church's life. The educational process is designed to bring classroom and field learning into complementary relationship. To accomplish this, the Seminary actively collaborates with local churches, hospitals and agencies to provide contexts for the practice of ministry. Church officials, pastors and laity help in the training, supervision and evaluation of Wesley students.</p> <p>Since the whole church is called to be in ministry that engages the gifts and talents of lay and clergy alike, our degree programs are tailored to fit varying vocational goals. All reflect an emphasis on preparing those called to leadership in the church. The range of educational programs at Wesley displays our understanding that all ministers - elder and deacon, lay and ordained, professional and nonprofessional - are called to proclaim the reconciling and liberating gospel of Jesus Christ to a broken world. Beyond our degree programs, the seminary's work of preparing persons for ministry is carried out in programs of continuing education for pastors, in lay certification programs, and through educational programs offered to the community at large. Wesley's commitment is to equip the whole people of God for the work of ministry.</p>
14. Asbury Theological Seminary	Asbury Seminary is a community called to prepare theologically educated, sanctified, Spirit-filled men and women to evangelize and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world through the love of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father.
15. Ashland Theological Seminary	MISSION STATEMENTS

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>Ashland Theological Seminary is part of the Graduate School of Ashland University, under the governance of the same Board of Trustees. The Seminary seeks to fulfill the identity statements of the University, while at the same time being true to its own unique calling as found in its mission statement and other identity statements.</p> <p>Ashland University educates and challenges students to develop intellectually and ethically, to seek wisdom and justice, and to prepare for the rigors of living and working as citizens aware of their global responsibilities.</p> <p>Ashland Theological Seminary integrates theological education with Christ-centered transformation as it equips men and women for ministry in the church and the world.</p>
16. Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary	For the glory of God and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary is a seminary in the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition whose mission is to educate and equip individuals for the ordained Christian ministry and other forms of Christian service and leadership; to employ its resources in the service of the church; to promote and engage in critical theological thought and research; and to be a winsome and exemplary community of God's people.
17. Brite Divinity School	Brite Divinity School educates women and men to lead in the ministry of Christ's church, the academy, and public life as witnesses to God's reconciling and transforming love and justice.
18. Chicago Theological Seminary	Chicago Theological Seminary, a seminary of the United Church of Christ, serves Christ and the churches and the wider faith community by preparing women and men in the understandings and skills needed for religious leadership and ministry to individuals, churches, and society.
19. Christian Theological Seminary	The mission of Christian Theological Seminary is to form disciples of Jesus Christ for church and community leadership to serve God's transforming of the world.
20. Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School	CRCDS prepares women and men for ministry in the local church and beyond that is learned, pastoral and prophetic. Rooted in the biblical mandate for justice and mercy we equip leaders for transforming ministry that speaks truth to power and stands among "the least of these." We engage the theological disciplines in an ecumenical Christian community of teaching, learning and worship.
21. Eastern Mennonite Seminary	EMU educates students to serve and lead in a global context. Our Christian community

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	challenges students to pursue their life calling through scholarly inquiry, artistic creation, guided practice, and life-changing cross-cultural encounter. We invite each person to follow Christ's call to bear witness to faith, serve with compassion, and walk boldly in the way of nonviolence and peace.
22. Eden Theological Seminary	Eden Theological Seminary is called to strengthen the life of the church by educating women and men for ministry, enlivening critical reflection on faith, and supporting bold Christian discipleship.
23. Evangelical Seminary	In partnership with the church, Evangelical Seminary develops servant leaders for transformational ministry in a broken and complex world by nurturing rigorous minds, passionate hearts, and Christ-centered actions.
24. Fuller Theological Seminary	Statement of Purpose Fuller Theological Seminary, embracing the School of Theology, School of Psychology, and School of Intercultural Studies, is an evangelical, multidenominational, international, and multiethnic community dedicated to the equipping of men and women for the manifold ministries of Christ and his Church. Under the authority of Scripture we seek to fulfill our commitment to ministry through graduate education, professional development, and spiritual formation. In all of our activities, including instruction, nurture, worship, service, research, and publication, Fuller Theological Seminary strives for excellence in the service of Jesus Christ, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of the Father.
25. Harvard Divinity School	Drawing on its historical strength in Christian studies and its significant resources in global religious studies, Harvard Divinity School educates scholars, teachers, ministers, and other professionals for leadership and service both nationally and internationally. To help in building a world in which people can live and work together across religious and cultural divides, we strive to be a primary resource in religious and theological studies for the academy, for religious communities, and in the public sphere.
26. Hood Theological Seminary	That mission is to provide for the church, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) communion, an educational community in which Christian maturity and ministerial preparation may together take place.
27. Lancaster Theological Seminary	Our mission is to educate and strengthen Christian leaders for congregations and other vocations serving church and society
28. Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary	Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary is called by God through the church to educate men and women to participate in the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ in the world.

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
29. Luther Seminary	<p>Luther Seminary adopted its present mission statement in 1995. The mission statement represents a major marker on the path of our journey. It serves as a primary point of reference for all of the strategic decisions we are making. Our mission statement is dynamic in character - a living statement that continues to breathe life into our work.</p> <p>Luther Seminary educates leaders for Christian communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + called and sent by the Holy Spirit + to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ and + to serve in God's world.
30. Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia	Centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia seeks to educate and form public leaders who are committed to developing and nurturing individual believers and communities of faith for engagement in the world
31. Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	To teach, form, and nurture women and men for public ministry in a context that is Christ-centered, faithfully Lutheran and ecumenically committed
32. Memphis Theological Seminary	The mission of Memphis Theological Seminary is to educate and sustain men and women for ordained and lay Christian ministry in the church and the world through shaping and inspiring lives devoted to scholarship, piety and justice.
33. Moravian Theological Seminary	Moravian Theological Seminary offers graduate degrees and continuing education programs to prepare men and women for effective leadership and service in congregational, counseling, teaching, and other ministries. The Seminary is rooted in the Moravian faith tradition — centered in Jesus Christ, grounded in Scripture, ecumenical in spirit, committed to community, and focused on missional leadership.
34. New York Theological Seminary	New York Theological Seminary is a diverse and inclusive community of learning with a historic urban focus. With Christ at its center, and with a curriculum informed by Biblical witness and Christian thought and tradition, the Seminary prepares women and men for the practice of ministry in congregations, the city, and the world. Led by the Spirit, and in active partnership with churches, we seek to heed God's call for reconciliation, justice, evangelism, and transformation.
35. Pacific School of Religion	<p>Direction Statement</p> <p>The Pacific School of Religion adopted this direction statement in 1998–99 to guide the school's efforts.</p> <p>Pacific School of Religion is committed to serving God by equipping historic and emerging faith communities for ministries of compassion and justice in a changing world. We affirm our historic mission to educate men and women for ministry and other forms of religious</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>leadership and to be a center and resource for Christian thought in an interfaith and pluralistic context. We affirm our ecumenical and Christian heritage and commitment as an open and affirming community that honors diversity and presses toward racial/ethnic, gender or gender identity, sexual, sexual orientation, ecological, and economic justice. PSR's commitments find expression in innovative programs of scholarship and education for clergy and laity. Strong faith communities require an integration of faith and reason, theory and practice, piety and critical intellect, tradition and creativity. We seek to embody these values and disciplines in our programs and our common life.</p> <p>PSR's location in a dynamic metropolitan area in the western United States, on the edge of the Pacific Basin, and adjacent to the University of California is a special resource and responsibility. As a member of the Graduate Theological Union and in partnership with our supporting denominations and local faith communities, we place high value on the search for truth, clarity of theological insight, artistry in the presentation of the Gospel and creation of community, strong reliance on faith in divine activity within and among us, and honesty, mutual respect, and integrity in our pastoral, educational, and administrative work.</p>
36. Palmer Theological Seminary	<p>Palmer Theological Seminary's motto: "The Whole Gospel for the Whole World through Whole Persons." The Whole Gospel</p> <p>Palmer Theological Seminary's Theological position affirms the Bible as uniquely inspired and the authoritative revelation of God's nature and purposes for humanity. Commitment to that revelation, fully expressed in Jesus Christ, calls for the preparation of persons for ministry who are faithful to all parts and implications of the Gospel. A curriculum faithful to the whole gospel prepares persons who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a thorough knowledge of the content of the Bible • are able to interpret and communicate the message of the Bible in a way that is faithful • are committed to both the individual and social dimensions of the Biblical message • affirm the Gospel's proclamation of the forgiveness of sin, the reconciliation of human beings to God and each other, and the gift of eternal life, through Jesus Christ. <p>For The Whole World</p> <p>Palmer Theological Seminary is committed to the preparation of persons for Christ's ministry in the Church throughout the world in a variety of forms and institutions, with strong emphasis on ministry in and through local churches, in both the American Baptist and other denominations. Recognizing that the Gospel expresses God's love for the whole world, Palmer Theological Seminary seeks to prepare persons who:</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are able to lead individuals to faith in Jesus Christ • have a passion for a ministry concerned with the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of people • are articulate and empowered expounders of Biblical truth in relation to all areas of human life • are skilled in assisting God's people toward a loving, serving and transforming presence in the world • are sensitive to the various cultural situations in which people live, and are able to relate the Gospel's saving and freeing power to the needs of persons and institutions in those settings • are equipped to lead the Church--through preaching and teaching, caring and counseling, evangelizing and serving--in dynamic growth and mission. <p>Through Whole Persons</p> <p>Palmer Theological Seminary seeks to equip persons for Christian ministry who view that ministry as divine vocation, know themselves to be called by God, and are committed to grow toward wholeness in their relationship with God, self, others, and their world. Palmer Theological Seminary is committed to assist persons toward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an awareness of their own brokenness and dependence upon God • the development of a spirit of openness toward others in the global body of Christ, beginning with an appreciation of that body's expression in Palmer Theological Seminary's diverse Christian community • a disciplined devotional life, bearing fruit in a vital, growing, contagious faith • regular participation in worship and fellowship which supports faith, expands vision, furthers intimacy in relation with God and others, and increases awareness of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
37. Phillips Theological Seminary	The seminary's mission is to learn and teach how to be: attentive to God; responsible biblical and theological interpreters; faithful individuals and communities acting with God to transform the world
38. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary	<p>On a dynamic and challenging global stage</p> <p>Pittsburgh Theological Seminary plays its part in</p> <p>God's redemption of the world through Jesus Christ</p> <p>By preparing leaders who proclaim with great joy</p> <p>God's message of good news in both word and deed!</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
39. Princeton Theological Seminary	<p>Princeton Theological Seminary prepares women and men to serve Jesus Christ in ministries marked by faith, integrity, scholarship, competence, compassion, and joy, equipping them for leadership worldwide in congregations and the larger church, in classrooms and the academy, and in the public arena.</p> <p>A professional and graduate school of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Seminary stands within the Reformed tradition, affirming the sovereignty of the triune God over all creation, the Gospel of Jesus Christ as God's saving word for all people, the renewing power of the word and Spirit in all of life, and the unity of Christ's servant church throughout the world. This tradition shapes the instruction, research, practical training, and continuing education provided by the Seminary, as well as the theological scholarship it promotes.</p> <p>In response to Christ's call for the unity of the church, the Seminary embraces in its life and work a rich racial and ethnic diversity and the breadth of communions represented in the worldwide church. In response to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, the Seminary offers its theological scholarship in service to God's renewal of the church's life and mission. In response to God's sovereign claim over all creation, the Seminary seeks to engage Christian faith with intellectual, political, and economic life in pursuit of truth, justice, compassion, and peace.</p> <p>To these ends, the Seminary provides a residential community of worship and learning where a sense of calling is tested and defined, where Scripture and the Christian tradition are appropriated critically, where faith and intellect mature and life-long friendships begin, and where habits of discipleship are so nourished that members of the community may learn to proclaim with conviction, courage, wisdom, and love the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.</p>
40. Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology	<p>In fulfillment of its mission, STVU seeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To act as a catalyst for the critical and conscientious faith development of students. • To assist students in defining and developing the specifics of their service in ministry. • To provide a compassionate and nurturing context for substantive theological study. • To serve as a facilitator of the church in defining and identifying worship in its broader aspects and in understanding its mission as it affects everyday life.
41. Seattle Pacific University School of Theology	<p>In the School of Theology, we embrace a threefold model of theological education that we call "Academy, Abbey, and Apostolate."</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	The interplay of scholarship, spiritual edification, and service — all informed by our Wesleyan heritage that joins “knowledge and vital piety” as a means of changing the world — defines a vision that distinguishes SPU among theology schools and seminaries.
42. Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry	Seattle University is dedicated to educating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and humane world.
43. Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico	<p>La misión del Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico es contribuir a la formación integral de hombres y mujeres para servir en el ministerio cristiano y participar en la misión del pueblo de Dios en Puerto Rico y las Américas. Nuestra razón de ser es acompañar a la comunidad estudiantil en su desarrollo y crecimiento espiritual, personal, social, académico y profesional, e identificar y responder a las necesidades de educación continua de egresados y egresadas e iglesias cooperadoras. Nuestra finalidad es lograr la excelencia y calidad en nuestros programas académicos y procesos administrativos. Nuestro deseo es responder adecuadamente a las necesidades de liderato de las iglesias locales, a los reclamos de las denominaciones y a los desafíos del siglo 21.</p> <p>[Translation] The Mission of the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico is to contribute to the integral formation of men and women to serve in Christian Ministry and participate in the Mission of God's people in Puerto Rico and the Americas. Our raison d'être is to accompany the student community in their development and growth spiritual, personal, social, academic and professional, and identify and respond to the needs of continuing education for graduates and graduates and cooperating churches. Our aim is to achieve excellence and quality in our academic programs and administrative processes. Our desire is to respond adequately to the needs of leadership of the local churches, denominations claims and the challenges of the 21st century.</p>
44. Sioux Falls Seminary	<p>Sioux Falls Seminary exists to serve the church by equipping servant leaders who engage the mission of Jesus Christ. This has been our focus since we began offering seminary education in 1858.</p> <p>Strong emphasis is placed on prayer, service, academic rigor, and practical experience. Seminary life prepares students to touch the lives of many in their future ministries</p>
45. Union Presbyterian Seminary	<p>Union Presbyterian Seminary equips Christian leaders for ministry in the world — a sacred vocation that requires deep learning, commitment to service, and an ability to read culture and circumstance in the light of the rich resources of scripture and theological tradition. The seminary's core mission is to participate in the mission of the church by forming and equipping leaders for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (<i>Eph 4:12</i>). As</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>a theological institution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) standing within the Reformed tradition,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. • We weave together distinctive approaches to theological education for pastoral and educational ministries. • We educate, inspire, and empower leaders for congregational life, theological scholarship, and bold Christian service to the world. • We serve as a theological resource for church and society. • We are a catalyst for the transformation of the church, and through the church, the world.
46. Union Theological Seminary	<p>Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and a graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church.” Union prepares women and men for committed lives of service to the church, academy, and society. A Union education develops practices of mind and body that foster intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom. Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to the needs of God’s creation, Union’s graduates make a difference wherever they serve.</p>
47. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities	<p>United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is an ecumenical graduate theological school founded by the United Church of Christ. As a Christian seminary our mission is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to prepare women and men for effective ordained and lay leadership in church and society; • to pursue theological inquiry and shape theological understanding; • to serve as a sustaining resource for religious leaders; and • to foster spiritual formation and ethical development.
48. University of Dubuque Theological Seminary	<p>The purpose of the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, an ecumenical seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is to serve the one God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and advance the ministry and mission of the church of Jesus Christ by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing women and men for faithful, compassionate, and effective pastoral and lay ministry in congregations, with special attention to rural and Native American constituencies, • research and publication in the theological disciplines, • active participation in the life of the church.
49. University of the South School of Theology	<p>Purpose Statement: “The School of Theology educates women and men to serve the broad whole of the Episcopal Church in ordained and lay vocations. The School develops</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	<p>leaders who are learned, skilled, informed by the Word of God, and committed to the mission of Christ's church, in the Anglican tradition of forming disciples through a common life of prayer, learning, and service. Sewanee's seminary education and world-wide programs equip people for ministry through the gift of theological reflection in community." Sewanee is a "thin" place, a place charged with God's presence, a place where the corporal and the spiritual meet. At The School of Theology, men and women discover a brilliant, passionate faculty devoting their minds to the Church's mission; a discipline of prayer that seeks the Holy Spirit's shaping energy; a community united by Christ while differing in perspective and background; informed, imaginative training in pastoral leadership; an unshaken confidence in the gifts the Anglican tradition brings to the Christian movement and the world; a humane, welcoming, vibrant community amid astonishing natural beauty: that is what Sewanee offers, in God's name.</p>
50. Vanderbilt University Divinity School	<p>The Divinity School seeks to fulfill the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to engage men and women in a theological understanding of religious traditions; • to help persons, both lay and ordained, reenvision and prepare for the practice of Christian ministry in our time; • to encourage individuals in their spiritual and intellectual growth; • to prepare leaders who will be agents of social justice; and • to educate future scholars and teachers of religion. <p>Degree programs enable students, with the aid of faculty advisers, to plan a course of study in light of their talents, interests, and professional objectives. Resources of the University and affiliated institutions offer rich opportunities for students to secure additional knowledge and skills in preparation for their vocations.</p>
51. Yale Divinity School	<p>Yale Divinity School has an enduring commitment to foster the knowledge and love of God through scholarly engagement with Christian traditions in a global, multifaith context. Participating in the vibrant life of Yale University, the Divinity School is uniquely positioned to train leaders for church and society given its ecumenical and international character, engagement with music and the arts, and commitment to social justice. Rigorous scholarly inquiry, corporate worship and spiritual formation, and practical engagement in a variety of ministries enable students to develop their knowledge and skills in a community that welcomes and affirms human diversity. The Divinity School pursues its mission of training students for service in church and world through three principal activities: (1) it prepares people for lay and ordained Christian ministries; (2) it shares with the Graduate School in educating scholars and teachers for theological schools and departments of religious</p>

School *United Methodist School	Statement of Commitments
	studies; (3) it equips people preparing for public service or other careers to understand more fully the theological dimensions of their vocations.

APPENDIX I

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENTS SUMMARY

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
1. *Boston University School of Theology		X		X	X	X	X	X
2. *Candler School of Theology Emory University		X	X	X				X
3. *Claremont School of Theology		X		X		X	X	X
4. *Drew University Theological School		X	X	X		X	X	X
5. *Duke Divinity School		X	X	X				X
6. *Gammon Theological Seminary		X						
7. *Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary		X		X		X		
8. *Iliff School of Theology		X	X	X		X	X	X

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
9. *Methodist Theological School in Ohio	Aspiration/Identity and Purpose Statement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10. *Perkins School of Theology		X				X	X	
11. *Saint Paul School of Theology		X	X	X		X		X
12. *United Theological Seminary		X	X	X				X
13. *Wesley Theological Seminary		X	X		X	X	X	X
14. Asbury Theological Seminary							X	
15. Ashland Theological Seminary			X	X	X		X	
16. Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary		X						X
17. Brite Divinity School		X		X	X			
18. Chicago Theological Seminary		X						

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
19. Christian Theological Seminary		X	X	X				
20. Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School		X		X	X			
21. Eastern Mennonite Seminary		X				X	X	
22. Eden Theological Seminary								
23. Evangelical Seminary		X	X	X				
24. Fuller Theological Seminary	Statement of Purpose					X		
25. Harvard Divinity School		X	X			X	X	
26. Hood Theological Seminary								
27. Lancaster Theological Seminary		X						
28. Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary			X					
29. Luther Seminary								

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
30. Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia		X	X					
31. Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary								
32. Memphis Theological Seminary			X		X			
33. Moravian Theological Seminary		X						X
34. New York Theological Seminary			X	X	X	X		X
35. Pacific School of Religion	Direction Statement	X	X		X	X		X
36. Palmer Theological Seminary	Seminary's Motto	X					X	
37. Phillips Theological Seminary			X	X				
38. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary		X	X				X	
39. Princeton Theological Seminary		X			X	X	X	X

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
40. Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology								
41. Seattle Pacific University School of Theology			X	X	X			
42. Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry		X	X					
43. Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico		X						
44. Sioux Falls Seminary		X						
45. Union Presbyterian Seminary		X	X	X				X
46. Union Theological Seminary			X		X			X
47. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities		X						
48. University of Dubuque Theological Seminary	Purpose Statement							
49. University of the South School of Theology	Purpose Statement	X	X				X	X

School/State/United Methodist School*	Comments	Leadership	World	Social Concern/ Transformation	Justice	Diversity	Global	Tradition
50. Vanderbilt University Divinity School		X			X			X
51. Yale Divinity School		X	X		X	X	X	X

APPENDIX J

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWEES

Name/Pseudonym	Race Identity/ Gender	Church	Age	Birthplace	Regional Experiences
1. Rev. Johnson	White Male	Social Justice		Muncie, IL	
2. Rev. Douglas	Black Male	Cross Racial	Graduated High School 1971 (60)	Lawndale, NC	
3. Ms. Wilson	Black Female	Social Justice	Young adult	Anderson, SC	Indiana
4. Ms. Mason	Black Female	Social Justice	Young adult	Alabama	Hampton, VA
5. Mrs. Matthews	White Female	Social Justice	63	Mississippi	
6. Rev. Barrett	Black Female	Cross Racial			
7. Mrs. McCain	Black Female	African American Church			
8. Mrs. Courts	Black Female	Social Justice	Older	Winston-Salem	Philadelphia
9. Rev. Russell	White Female	Cross Racial	63	Illinois	Michigan
10. Rev. Ford	White Male	Evangelical			New Jersey
11. Mr. Holmes	Black Male	Evangelical		Rural Mississippi	
12. Ms. Nichols	African Female	Evangelical		Liberia	Minnesota
13. Mr. Hall	Indian Male	Evangelical		India	Minneapolis

Name/Pseudonym	Race Identity/ Gender	Church	Age	Birthplace	Regional Experiences
14. Mr. Wyatt	Hispanic Male	Evangelical		Ecuador	New Jersey
15. Mr. Jamison	Black Male	Evangelical		Trenton, NJ	Walnut Cove, Chicago
16. Mrs. Lloyd	Black Female	Evangelical		NYC	
17. Mr. Lloyd	Black Male	Evangelical		Niagara Falls, NY	
18. Ms. Martin	Black Female	Evangelical		Gastonia, NC	Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Columbia, SC, NJ Cary,
19. Mr. Maxwell	Black (Islander) Male	Evangelical		Trinidad and Tobago	NYC
20. Mrs. Maxwell	Black (Islander) Female	Evangelical		Trinidad and Tobago	NY
21. Mr. Burnett	White Male	Evangelical		Northwestern Pennsylvania	CT
22. Ms. Thompson	Black Female	Evangelical		White Plains or Port Chester, NY	